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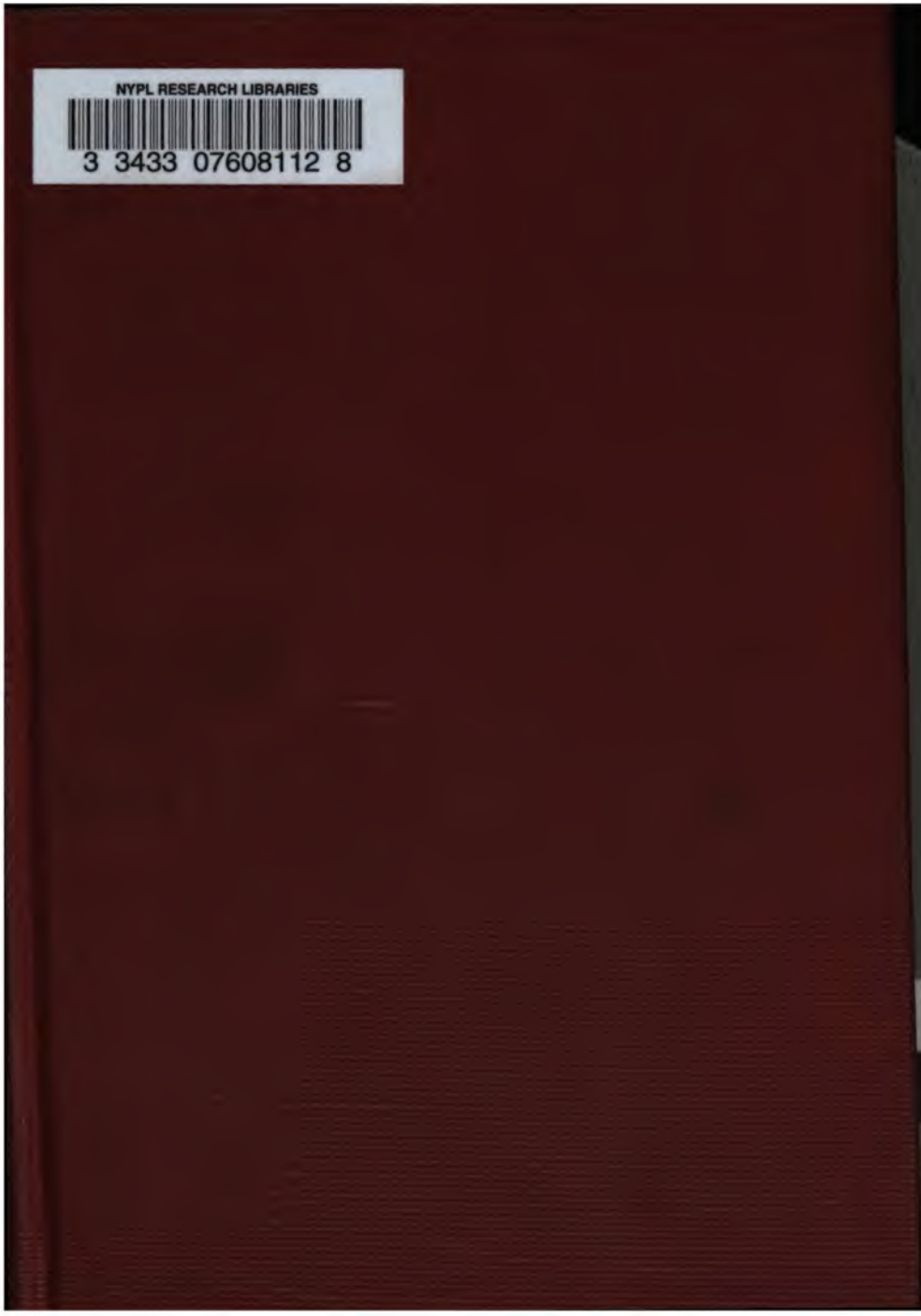
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McCutcheon

THE NEW YORK

"He saw the Princess for the first time that afternoon" (p. 25)

THE MAN FROM BRODNEY'S

BY
GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON
Author of "Graustark"
"Beverly of Graustark"
etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY HARRISON FISHER

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DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
1908

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THE MAN FROM BRODNEY'S

CHAPTER I

THE LATE MR. SKAGGS

THE death of Taswell Skaggs was stimulating, to say the least, inapplicable though the expression may seem.

He attained the end of a hale old age by tumbling aimlessly into the mouth of a crater on the island of Japat, somewhere in the mysterious South Seas. The volcano was not a large one and the crater, though somewhat threatening at times, was correspondingly minute, which explains—in apology—to some extent, his unfortunate misstep.

Moreover, there is but one volcano on the surface of Japat; it seems all the more unique that he, who had lived for thirty years or more on the island, should have stepped into it in broad daylight, especially as it was he who had tacked up warning placards along every avenue of approach.

Inasmuch as he was more than eighty years old at the time, it would seem to have been a most reprehensible miscalculation on the part of the Grim Reaper to have gone to so much trouble.

But that is neither here nor there.

Taswell Skaggs was dead and once more remembered. The remark is proper, for the world had quite thoroughly forgotten him during the twenty odd years immediately preceding his death. It was, however, noticeably worth while to remember him at this particular time: he left a last will and testament that bade fair to distress as well as startle a great many people on both

sides of the Atlantic, among whom it may be well to include certain distinguished members of the legal profession.

In Boston the law firm of Bowen & Hare was puzzling itself beyond reason in the effort to anticipate and circumvent the plans of the firm of Bosworth, Newnes & Grapewin, London, E. C.; while on the other side of the Atlantic Messrs. Bosworth, Newnes & Grapewin were blindly struggling to do precisely the same thing in relation to Messrs. Bowen & Hare.

Without seeking to further involve myself, I shall at once conduct the reader to the nearest of these law offices; he may hear something to his own interest from Bowen & Hare. We find the partners sitting in the private room.

"Pretty badly tangled, I declare," said Mr. Hare, staring helplessly at his senior partner.

"Hopelessly," agreed Mr. Bowen, very much as if he had at first intended to groan.

Before them on the table lay the contents of a bulky envelope: a long and stupendous letter from their London correspondents and with it a copy of Taswell Skaggs's will. The letter had come in the morning's mail, heralded by a rather vague cablegram the week before. To be brief, Mr. Bowen recently had been named as joint executor of the will, together with Sir John Allencrombie, of London, W. C., one time neighbour of the late Mr. Skaggs. A long and exasperating cablegram had touched somewhat irresolutely upon the terms of the will, besides notifying him that one of the heirs resided in Boston. He was instructed to apprise this young man of his good fortune. This he delayed in doing until after he had obtained more definite information from England. The full and complete statement of facts was now before him.

There was one *very* important, perhaps imposing

feature in connection with the old gentleman's will: he was decidedly sound of mind and body when it was uttered.

When such astute lawyers as Bowen & Hare give up to amazement, the usual forerunner of consternation, it is high time to regard the case as startling. Their practice was far-reaching and varied; imperviousness had been acquired through long years of restraint. But this day they were sharply ousted from habitual calmness into a state of mind bordering on the ludicrous.

"Read it again, Bowen."

"The will?"

"No; the letter."

Whereupon Mr. Bowen again read aloud the letter from Bosworth, Newnes & Grapewin, this time slowly and speculatively.

"They seem as much upset by the situation as we," he observed reflectively.

"Extraordinary state of affairs, I must say."

"And I don't know what to do about it—I don't even know how to begin. They're both married."

"And not to each other."

"She's the wife of a Lord-knows-what-kind-of-a-lord, and he's married to an uncommonly fine girl, they say, notwithstanding the fact that she has larger social aspirations than he has means."

"And if that all-important clause in the will is not carried out to the letter, the whole fortune goes to the bow-wows."

"Practically the same thing. He calls them 'natives,' that's all. It looks to me as though the bow-wows will get the old man's millions. I don't see how anything short of Providence can alter the situation."

Mr. Bowen looked out over the house-tops and Mr. Hare laughed softly under his breath.

"Thank heaven, Bowen, he names you as executor, not me."

"I shall decline to serve. It's an impossible situation, Hare. In the first place, Skaggs was not an intimate friend of mine. I met him in Constantinople five years ago and afterward handled some business for him in New York. He had no right to impose upon me as if——"

"But why should you hesitate? You have only to wait for the year to roll by and then turn your troubles over to the natives. Young Browne can't marry Miss Ruthven inside of a year, simply because there is no Miss Ruthven. She's Lady—Lady—what's the name?"

"Deppingham."

"And Browne already has one Mrs. Browne to his credit, don't you see? Well, that settles it, I'd say. It's hardly probable that Browne will murder or divorce his wife, nor is it likely that her ladyship would have the courage to dispose of her encumbrance in either way on such short notice."

"But it means millions to them, Hare."

"That's their unfortunate lookout. You are to act as an executor, not as a matrimonial agent."

"But, man, it's an outrage to give all of it to those wretched islanders. Bosworth says that rubies and sapphires grow there like mushrooms."

"Bosworth also says that the islanders are thrifty, intelligent and will fight for their rights. There are lawyers among them, he says, as well as jewel diggers and fishermen."

"Skaggs and Lady Deppingham's grandfather were the only white men who ever lived there long enough to find out what the island had stored up for civilisation. That's why they bought it outright, but I'm hanged if I can see why he wants to give it back to the natives."

"Perhaps he owes it to them. He doubtless bought it

for a song and, contrary to all human belief, he may have resurrected a conscience. Anyhow, there remains a chance for the heirs to break the will."

"It can't be done, Hare, it can't be done. It's as clean an instrument as ever survived a man."

It is, by this time, safe for the reader to assume that Mr. Taswell Skaggs had been a rich man and therefore privileged to be eccentric. It is also time for the writer to turn the full light upon the tragic comedy which entertained but did not amuse a select audience of lawyers on both sides of the Atlantic. As this tale has to do with the adventures of Taswell Skaggs's heirs and not with the strange old gentleman who sleeps his last sleep literally in the midst of the island of Japat, it is eminently wise to make as little as possible of him.

Mr. Skaggs came of a sound old country family in upper England, but seems to have married a bit above his station. His wife was serving as governess in the home of a certain earl when Taswell won her heart and dragged her from the exalted position of minding other people's children into the less conspicuous one of caring for her own. How the uncouth country youth—not even a squire—overcame her natural prejudice against the lower classes is not for me to explain. Sufficient to announce, they were married and lived unhappily ever afterward.

Their only son was killed by a runaway horse when he was twenty, and their daughter became the wife of an American named Browne when she was scarcely out of her teens. It was then that Mr. Skaggs, practically childless, determined to make himself wifeless as well.

He magnanimously deeded the unentailed farm to his wife, turned his securities into cash and then set forth upon a voyage of exploration. It is common history that upon one dark, still night in December he said

good-bye forever to the farm and its mistress; but it is doubtful if either of them heard him.

To be "jolly well even" with him, Mrs. Skaggs did a most priggish thing. She died six months later. But, before doing so, she made a will in which she left the entire estate to her daughter, effectually depriving the absent husband of any chance to reclaim his own.

Taswell Skaggs was in Shanghai when he heard the news. It was on a Friday. His informant was that erstwhile friend, Jack Wyckholme. Naturally, Skaggs felt deeply aggrieved with the fate which permitted him to capitulate when unconditional surrender was so close at hand. His language for one brief quarter of an hour did more to upset the progress of Christian endeavour in the Far East than all the idols in the Chinese Empire.

"There's nawthin' in England for me, Jackie. My gal's a bloomin' foreigner by this time and she'll sell the bleedin' farm, of course. She's an h'American, God bless 'er 'eart. I daresay if I'd go to 'er and say I'd like my farm back again she'd want to fork hover, but 'er bloody 'usband wouldn't be for that sort of hextravagance. 'E'd boot me off the hisland."

"The United States isn't an island, Tazzy," explained Mr. Wyckholme, gulping his brandy and soda.

Mr. Wyckholme was the second son of Sir Somebody-or-other and had married the vicar's daughter. This put him into such bad odour with his family that he hurried off to the dogs—and a goodly sized menagerie besides, if the records of the inebriate's asylum are to be credited. His wife, after enduring him for sixteen years, secured a divorce. It may not have been intended as an insult to the scapegoat, but no sooner had she freed herself from him than his father, Sir Somebody-or-other, took her and her young daughter into the ancestral halls and gave them a much-needed abiding-place. This

left poor Mr. Jack quite completely out in the world—and he proceeded to make the best and the worst of it while he had the strength and ambition. Accepting the world as his home, he ventured forth to visit every nook and cranny of it. In course of time he came upon his old-time neighbour and boyhood friend, Taswell Skaggs, in the city of Shanghai. Neither of them had seen the British Isles in two years or more.

"'Ow do you know?" demanded Taswell.

"Haven't I been there, old chap? A year or more? It's a rotten big place where gentlemen aspire to sell gloves and handkerchiefs and needlework over the shop counters. At any rate, that's what every one said every one else was doing, and advised me to—to get a situation doing the same. You know, Tazzy, I couldn't well afford to starve and I *wouldn't* sell things, so I came away. But it's no island."

"Well, that's neither here nor there, Jackie. I 'aven't a 'ome and you 'aven't a 'ome, and we're wanderers on the face of the earth. My wife played me a beastly trick, dying like that. I say marriage is a blooming nuisance."

"Marriage, my boy, is the convalescence from a love affair. One wants to get out the worst way but has to stay in till he's jolly well cured. For my part, I'm never going back to England."

"Nor I. It would be just like me, Jackie, to 'ave a relapse and never get out again."

The old friends, with tear-dimmed eyes, shook hands and vowed that nothing short of death should part them during the remainder of their journey through life. That night they took an inventory. Jack Wyckholme, gentleman's son and ne'er-do-well, possessed nine pounds and a fraction, an appetite and excellent spirits, while Taswell Skaggs exhibited a balance of one thousand

pounds in a Shanghai bank, a fairly successful trade in Celestial necessities, and an unbounded eagerness to change his luck.

"I have a proposition to make to you, Tazzy," said Mr. Wyckholme, late in the night.

"I think I'll listen to it, Jackie," replied Mr. Skaggs, quite soberly.

As the outcome of this midnight proposition, Taswell Skaggs and John Wyckholme arrived, two months later, at the tiny island of Japat, somewhere south of the Arabian Sea, there to remain until their dying days and there to accumulate the wealth which gave the first named a chance to make an extraordinary will. For thirty years they lived on the island of Japat. Wyckholme preceded Skaggs to the grave by two winters and he willed his share of everything to his partner of thirty years' standing. But there was a proviso in Wyckholme's bequest, just as there was in that of Skaggs. Each had made his will some fifteen years or more before death and each had bequeathed his fortune to the survivor. At the death of the survivor the entire property was to go to the grandchild of each testator, with certain reservations to be mentioned later on, each having, by investigation, discovered that he possessed a single grandchild.

The island of Japat had been the home of a Mohammedan race, the outgrowth of Arabian adventurers who had fared far from home many years before Wyckholme happened upon the island by accident. It was a British possession and there were two or three thousand inhabitants, all Mohammedans. Skaggs and Wyckholme purchased the land from the natives, protected and eased their rights with the government and proceeded to realise on what the natives had unwittingly prepared for them. In course of time the natives repented of the deal

which gave the Englishmen the right to pick and sell the rubies and other precious stones that they had been trading away for such trifles as silks, gewgaws and women; a revolution was imminent. Whereupon the owners organised the entire population into a great stock company, retaining four-fifths of the property themselves. This seemed to be a satisfactory arrangement, despite the fact that some of the more warlike leaders were difficult to appease. But, as Messrs. Wyckholme and Skaggs owned the land and the other grants, there was little left for the islanders but arbitration. It is only necessary to add that the beautiful island of Japat, standing like an emerald in the sapphire waters of the Orient, brought millions in money to the two men who had been unlucky in love.

And now, after more than thirty years of voluntary exile, both of them were dead, and both of them were buried in the heart of an island of rubies, their deed and their deeds remaining to posterity—with reservations.

CHAPTER II

AN EXTRAORDINARY DOCUMENT

It appears that the Messrs. Skaggs and Wyckholme, as their dual career drew to a close, set about to learn what had become of their daughters. Investigation proved that Wyckholme's daughter had married a London artist named Ruthven. The Ruthvens in turn had one child, a daughter. Wyckholme's wife and his daughter died when this grandchild was eight or ten years old. By last report, the grandchild was living with her father in London. She was a pretty young woman with scores of admirers on her hands and a very level head on her shoulders.

Wyckholme held to his agreement with Skaggs by bequeathing his share of the property to him, but it was definitely set forth that at the death of his partner it was to go to Agnes Ruthven, the grandchild—with reservations.

Skaggs found that his daughter, who married Browne the American, likewise had died, but that she had left behind a son and heir. This son, Robert Browne, was in school when the joint will was designed, and he was to have Skaggs's fortune at the death of Wyckholme, in case that worthy survived.

All this would have been very simple had it not been for the instructions and conditions agreed upon by the two men. In order to keep the business and the property intact and under the perpetual control of one partnership, the granddaughter of Wyckholme was to marry the grandson of Skaggs within the year after the death of the surviving partner. The penalty to be imposed upon them if the conditions were not complied with—neither

to be excusable for the defection of the other—lay in the provision that the whole industry and its accumulated fortune, including the land (and they owned practically the entire island), was to go to the islanders—or, in plain words, to the original owners, their heirs, share and share alike, all of which was set forth concisely in a separate document attached. Wyckholme named Sir John Allencrombie as one executor and Skaggs selected Alfred Bowen, of Boston, as the other.

As Wyckholme was the first to die, Skaggs became sole owner of the island and its treasures, and it was he who made the final will in accordance with the original plans.

The island of Japat with its jewels and its ancient château—of modern construction—represented several million pounds sterling. Its owners had accumulated a vast fortune, but, living in seclusion as they did, were hard put for means to spend any considerable part of it. Wyckholme's dream of erecting an exact replica of a famous old château found response in the equally whimsisical Skaggs, who constantly bemoaned the fact that it was impossible to spend money. For five years after its completion the two old men, with an army of Arabian retainers and Nubian slaves, lived like Oriental potentates in the huge structure on the highlands overlooking the sea.

Skaggs seldom went from one part of his home to another without a guide. It was so vast and so labyrinthine that he feared he might become lost forever. The dungeon below the château, and the moat with its bridges, were the especial delight of these lonely, romantic old chaps. One of the builders of this rare pile was now sleeping peacefully in the sarcophagus beneath the chapel; the other was lying dead and undiscovered in the very heart of his possessions. Their executors were sourly wondering whether the two venerable testators

were not even then grinning from those faraway sepulchres in contemplation of the first feud their unprimitive castle was to know.

The magnificent plans of the partners would have been a glorious tribute to romance had it not been for one fatal obstacle. The trouble was that neither young Miss Ruthven nor young Mr. Browne knew that their grandfathers lived, much less that they owned an island in the South Seas. Therefore it is quite natural that they could not have known they were expected to marry each other. In complete but blissful ignorance that the other existed, the young legatees fell in love with persons unmentioned in the will and performed the highly commendable but exceedingly complicating act of matrimony. This emergency, it is humane to suspect, had not revealed itself to either of the grandfathers.

Miss Ruthven, from motives peculiar to the head and not to the heart, set about to earn a title for herself. Three months before the death of Mr. Skaggs she was married to Lord Deppingham, who possessed a title and a country place that rightfully belonged to his creditors. Mr. Browne, just out of college, hung out his shingle as a physician and surgeon, and forthwith, with all the confidence his profession is supposed to inspire, proceeded to marry the daughter of a brokerage banker in Boston and at once found himself struggling with the difficulties of Back Bay society.

A clause in the will, letter of instruction attached, demanded that the two grandchildren should take up their residence in the château within six months after the death of the testator, there to remain through the compulsory days of courtship up to and including the wedding day. Four months had already passed. It was also stipulated that the executors should receive £10,000 each at the expiration of their year of servitude, provided it was

shown in court that they had carried out the wishes of the testator, or, in failing, had made the most diligent effort within human power.

"It is very explicit," murmured Mr. Hare, for the third time. "I suppose the first step is to notify young Mr. Browne of his misfortune. His lordship has the task of breaking the news to Lady Deppingham."

"You are assuming that I intend to act under this ridiculous will."

"Certainly. It means about £50,000 to you at the end of the year, with nothing to do but to notify two persons of the terms in the will. If they're not divorced and married again at the end of the year, you and Sir John simply turn everything over to the Malays or whatever they are. It's something like 'dust to dust,' isn't it, after all? I think it's easy sledding for you."

Mr. Bowen was eventually won over by Mr. Hare's enthusiasm. "Notifications" took wing and flew to different parts of the world, while many lawyers hovered like vultures to snatch at the bones should a war at law ensue.

Young Mr. Browne (he was hardly a doctor even in name) hastened downtown in response to a message from the American executor, and was told of the will which had been filed in England, the home land of the testator. To say that this debonair, good-looking young gentleman was flabbergasted would be putting it more than mildly. There is no word in the English language strong enough to describe his attitude at that perilous moment.

"What shall I do—what can I do, Mr. Bowen?" he gasped, bewildered.

"Consult an attorney," advised Mr. Bowen promptly.

"I'll do it," shouted "Bobby" Browne, one time halfback on his college eleven. "Break the will for me, Mr. Bowen, and I'll give——"

"I can't break it, Bobby. I'm its executor."

"Good Lord! Well, then, who is the best will-breaker you know, please? Something has to be done right away."

"I'm afraid you don't grasp the situation. Now if you were not married it would——"

"I wouldn't give up my wife for all the islands in the universe. That's settled. You don't know how happy we are. She's the——"

"Yes, yes, I know," interrupted the wily Mr. Bowen. "Don't tell me about it. She's a stumbling block, however, even though we are agreed that she's a most delightful one. Your co-legatee also possesses a block, perhaps not so delicate, but I daresay she feels the same about hers as you do about yours. I can't advise you, my boy. Go and see Judge Garrett over in the K—— building. They say he expects to come back from the grave to break his own will."

Ten minutes later an excited young man rushed into an office in the K—— building. Two minutes afterward he was laying the case before that distinguished old counsellor, Judge Abner Garrett.

"You will have to fight it jointly," said Judge Garrett, after extracting the wheat from the chaff of Browne's remarks. "You can't take hers away from her and she can't get yours. We must combine against the natives. Come back to-morrow at two."

Promptly at two Browne appeared, eager-eyed and nervous. He had left behind him at home a miserable young woman with red eyes and choking breath who bemoaned the cruel conviction that she stood between him and fortune.

"But hang it all, dearest, I wouldn't marry that girl if I had the chance. I'd marry you all over again to-day if I could," he had cried out to her, but she wondered all afternoon if he really meant it. It never entered her head

to wonder if Lady Deppingham was old or young, pretty or ugly, bright or dull. She had been Mrs. Browne for three months and she could not quite understand how she had been so happy up to this sickening hour.

Judge Garrett had a copy of the will in his hand. He looked dubious, even dismayed.

"It's as sound as the rock of Gibraltar," he announced dolefully.

"You don't mean it!" gasped poor Bobby, mopping his fine Harvard brow, his six feet of manhood shrinking perceptibly as he looked about for a chair in which to collapse. "C—can't it be smashed?"

"It might be an easy matter to prove either of these old gentlemen to have been insane, but the two of them together make it out of the question——"

"Darned unreasonable."

"What do you mean, sir?" indignantly.

"I mean—oh, you know what I mean. The conditions and all that. Why, the old chumps must have been trying to prove their grandchildren insane when they made that will. Nobody but imbeciles would marry people they'd never seen. I——"

"But the will provides for a six months' courtship, Dr. Browne, I'm sorry to say. You might learn to love a person in less time and still retain your mental balance, you know, especially if she were pretty and an heiress to half your own fortune. I daresay that is what they were thinking about."

"Thinking? They weren't thinking of anything at all. They weren't capable. Why didn't they consider the possibility that things might turn out just as they have?"

"Possibly they did consider it, my boy. It looks to me as if they did not care a rap whether it went to their blood relatives or to the islanders. I fancy of the two they loved the islanders more. At any rate, they left a

beautiful opening for the very complications which now conspire to give the natives their own, after all. There may be some sort of method in their badness. More than likely they concluded to let luck decide the matter."

"Well, I guess it has, all right."

"Don't lose heart. It's worth fighting for even if you lose. I'd hate to see those islanders get all of it, even if you two can't marry each other. I've thought it over pretty thoroughly and I've reached a conclusion. It's necessary for both of you to be on the ground according to schedule. You must go to the island, wife or no wife, and there's not much time to be lost. Lady Deppingham won't let the grass grow under her feet if I know anything about the needs of English nobility, and I'll bet my hat she's packing her trunks now for a long stay in Japat. You have farther to go than she, but you *must* get over there inside of sixty days. I daresay your practice can take care of itself," ironically. Browne nodded cheerfully. "You can't tell what may happen in the next six months."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, it's possible that you may become a widower and she a wid——"

"Good heaven, Judge Garrett! Impossible!" gasped Bobby Browne, clutching the arms of his chair.

"Nothing is impossible, my boy——"

"Well, if that's what you're counting on you can count me out. I won't speculate on my wife's death."

"But, man, suppose that it *did* happen!" roared the judge irascibly. "You should be prepared for the best —I mean the worst. Don't look like a sick dog. We've got to watch every corner, that's all, and be Johnny-on-the-spot when the time comes. You go to the island at once. Take your wife along if you like. You'll find her ladyship there, and she'll need a woman to tell her

troubles to. I'll have the papers ready for you to sign in three days, and I don't think we'll have any trouble getting the British heirs to join in the suit to overthrow the will. The only point is this: the islanders must not have the advantage that your absence from Japat will give to them. Now, I'll——"

"But, good Lord, Judge Garrett, I can't go to that confounded island," wailed Browne. "Take my wife over among those heathenish——"

"Do you expect me to handle this case for you, sir?"

"Sure."

"Then let me handle it. Don't interfere. When you start in to get somebody else's money you have to do a good many things you don't like, no matter whether you are a lawyer or a client."

"But I don't like the suggestion that my wife will be obliged to die in order——"

"Please leave all the details to me, Mr. Browne. It may not be necessary for her to die. There are other alternatives in law. Give the lawyers a chance. We'll see what we can do. Besides, it would be unreasonable to expect his lordship to die also. All you have to do is to plant yourself on that island and stay there until we tell you to get off."

"Or the islanders push me off," lugubriously.

"Now, listen intently and I'll tell you just what you are to do."

Young Mr. Browne went away at dusk, half reeling under the responsibility of existence, and eventually reached the side of the anxious young woman uptown. He bared the facts and awaited the wail of dismay.

"I think it will be perfectly jolly," she cried, instead, and kissed him rapturously.

Over on the opposite side of the Atlantic the excitement in certain circles was even more intense than that

produced in Boston. Lord Deppingham needed the money, but he was a whole day in grasping the fact that his wife could not have it and him at the same time. The beautiful and fashionable Lady Deppingham, once little Agnes Ruthven, came as near to having hysteria as Englishwomen ever do, but she called in a lawyer instead of a doctor. For three days she neglected her social duties (and they were many), ignored her gallant admirers (and they were many), and hurried back and forth between home and chambers so vigorously that his lordship was seldom closer than a day behind in anything she did.

There was a great rattling of trunks, a jangling of keys, a thousand good-byes, a cast-off season, and the Deppinghams were racing away for the island of Japat, somewhere in the far South Seas.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCING HOLLINGSWORTH CHASE

WHILE all this was being threshed out by the persons most vitally interested in the affairs of Taswell Skaggs and John Wyckholme, events of a most unusual character were happening to one who not only had no interest in the aforesaid heritage, but no knowledge whatever of its existence. The excitement attending the Skaggs-Wyckholme revelations had not yet spread to the Grand Duchy of Rapp-Thorberg, apparently lost as it was in the cluster of small units which went to make up a certain empire: one of the world powers. The Grand Duke Michael disdained the world at large; he had but little in common with anything that moved beyond the confines of his narrow domain. His court was sleepy, lackadaisical, unemotional, impregnable to the taunts of progression; his people were thrifty, stolid and absolutely stationary in their loyalty to the ancient traditions of the duchy; his army was a mere matter of taxation and not a thing of pomp or necessity. Four times a year he inspected the troops, and just as many times in the year were the troops obliged to devote themselves to rigorous display. The rest of the time was spent in social intrigue and whistling for the war-clouds that never came.

The precise location of the Grand Duchy in the map of the world has little or nothing to do with this narrative; indeed, were it not for the fact that the Grand Duke possessed a charming and most desirable daughter, the Thorberg dynasty would not be mentioned at all. For that matter, it is brought to light briefly for the sole purpose of identifying the young lady in question, and

the still more urgent desire to connect her past with her future—for which we have, perhaps intemperately, an especial consideration. It is only necessary, therefore, for us to step into and out of the Grand Duchy without the procrastination usual in a sojourner, stopping long enough only to see how tiresome it would be to stay, and to wonder why any one remained who could get away. Not that the Grand Duchy was an utterly undesirable place, but that too much time already had been wasted there by the populace itself.

It has been said that events of a most unusual character were happening; any event that roused the people from their daily stolidity was sufficiently unusual to suggest the superlative. The Grand Duke's peace of mind had been severely disturbed—so severely, in fact, that he was transferring his troubles to the Emperor, who, in turn, felt obliged to communicate with the United States Ambassador, and who, in his turn, had no other alternative than to take summary action in respect to the indiscretions of a fellow-countryman.

In the beginning, it was not altogether the fault of the young man who had come from America to serve his country. Whatever may have been the turmoil in the Grand Duke's palace at Thorberg, Chase's conscience was even and serene. He had no excuses to offer—for that matter none would have been entertained—and he was resigning his post with the confidence that he had performed his obligations as an American gentleman should, even though the performance had created an extraordinary commotion. Chase was new to the Old World and its customs, especially those rigorous ones which surrounded royalty and denied it the right to venture into the commonplace. The ambassador at the capital of the Empire at first sought to excuse him on the ground of ignorance; but the Grand Duke insisted that even an

American could not be such a fool as Chase had been; so, it must have been a wilful offence that led up to the controversy.

Chase had been the representative of the American Government at Thorberg for six months. He never fully understood why the government should have a representative there; but that was a matter quite entirely for the President to consider. The American flag floated above his doorway in the Friedrich Strasse, but in all his six months of occupation not ten Americans had crossed the threshold. As a matter of fact, he had seen fewer than twenty Americans in all that time. He was a vigorous, healthy young man, and it may well be presumed that the situation bored him. Small wonder, then, that he kept out of mischief for half a year. Diplomatic service is one thing and the lack of opportunity is quite another. Chase did his best to find occupation for his diplomacy, but what chance had he with nothing ahead of him but regular reports to the department in which he could only announce that he was in good health and that no one had "called."

Chase belonged to the diplomatic class which owes its elevation to the influence of Congress—not to Congress as a body but to one of its atoms. He was not a politician; no more was he an office seeker. He was a real soldier of fortune, in search of affairs—in peace or in war, on land or at sea. Possessed of a small income, sufficiently adequate to sustain life if he managed to advance it to the purple age (but wholly incapable of supporting him as a thriftless diplomat), he was compelled to make the best of his talents, no matter to what test they were put. He left college at twenty-two, possessed of the praiseworthy design to earn his own way without recourse to the $4,500 income from a certain trust fund. His plan also incorporated the hope to

save every penny of that income for the possible "rainy day." He was now thirty; in each of several New York banks he had something like $4,000 drawing three per cent. interest while he picked his blithe way through the world on $2,500 a year, more or less, as chance ordained.

"When I'm forty," Chase was wont to remark to envious spendthrifts who couldn't understand his philosophy, "I'll have over a hundred thousand there, and if I live to be ninety, just think what I'll have! And it will be like finding the money, don't you see? Of course, I won't live to be ninety. Moreover, I may get married and have to maintain a poor wife with rich relatives, which is a terrible strain, you know. You have to live up to your wife's relatives, if you don't do anything else."

He did not refer to the chance that he was quite sure to come in for a large legacy at the death of his maternal grandfather, a millionaire ranch owner in the Far West. Chase never counted on probabilities; he took what came and was satisfied.

After leaving college, he drifted pretty much over the world, taking pot luck with fortune and clasping the hand of circumstance, to be led into the highways and byways, through good times and ill times, in love and out, always coming safely into port with a smiling wind behind. There had been hard roads to travel as well as easy ones, but he never complained; he swung on through life with the heart of a soldier and the confidence of a Pagan. He loathed business and he abhorred trade.

"That little old trust fund is making more money for me by lying idle than I could accumulate in a century by hard work as a grocer or an undertaker," he was prone to philosophise when his uncles, who were merchants, urged him to settle down and "do something." Not that there were grocers or undertakers among them; it was his way of impressing his sense of freedom upon them.

He was an orphan and bounden to no man. No one had the right to question his actions after his twenty-first anniversary. It was fortunate for him that he was a level-headed as well as a wild-hearted chap, else he might have sunk to the perdition his worthy uncles prescribed for him. He went in for law at Yale, and then practised restlessly, vaguely for two years in Baltimore, under the patronage of his father's oldest friend, a lawyer of distinction.

"If I fail at everything else, I'll go back to the practice of law," he said cheerfully. "Uncle Henry is mean enough to say that he has forgotten more law than I ever knew, but he has none the better of me. 'Gad, I am confident that I've forgotten more law, myself, than I ever knew."

Tiring of the law books and reports in the old judge's office, he suddenly abandoned his calling and set forth to see the world. Almost before his friends knew that he had left he was heard of in Turkestan. In course of time he served as a war correspondent for one of the great newspapers, acted as agent for great hemp dealers in the Philippines, carried a rifle with the Boers in South Africa, hunted wild beasts in Asia and in Hottentot land, took snapshots in St. Petersburg, and almost got to the North Pole with one of the expeditions. To do and be all of these he had to be a manly man. Not in a month's journey would you meet a truer thoroughbred, a more agreeable chap, a more polished vagabond, than Hollingsworth Chase, first lieutenant in Dame Fortune's army. Tall, good looking, rawboned, cheerful, gallant, he was the true comrade of those merry, reckless volunteers from all lands who find commissions in Fortune's army and serve her faithfully. He had shared pot luck in odd parts of the world with English lords, German barons and French counts—all serving under the com-

mon flag. His heart had withstood the importunate batterings of many a love siege; the wounds had been pleasant ones and the recovery quick. He left no dead behind him.

He was nearly thirty when the diplomatic service began to appeal to him as a pleasing variation from the rigorous occupations he had followed heretofore. A British lordling put it into his head, away out in Delhi. It took root, and he hurried home to attend to its growth. One of his uncles was a congressman and another was in some way connected with railroads. He first sought the influence of the latter and then the recommendation of the former. In less than six weeks after his arrival in Washington he was off for the city of Thorberg in the Grand Duchy of Rapp-Thorberg, carrying with him an appointment as consul and supplied with the proper stamps and seal of office. His uncle compassionately informed him beforehand that his service in Thorberg would be brief and certainly would lead up to something much better.

At the end of five months he was devoutly, even pathetically, hoping that his uncle was no false prophet. He loathed Thorberg; he hated the inhabitants; he smarted under the sting of royal disdain; he had no real friends, no boon companions and he was obliged to be good! What wonder, then, that the bored, suffering, vivacious Mr. Chase seized the first opportunity to leap headforemost into the very thick of a most appalling indiscretion!

When he first arrived in Thorberg to assume his sluggish duties he was not aware of the fact that the Grand Duke had an unmarried daughter, the Princess Genevra. Nor, upon learning that the young lady existed, was he particularly impressed; the royal princesses he had been privileged to look upon were not remarkable for their

personal attractiveness: he forthwith established Genevra in what he considered to be her proper sphere.

She was visiting in St. Petersburg or Berlin or some other place—he gave it no thought at the time—when he reached his post of duty, and it was toward the end of his fifth month before she returned to her father's palace in Thorberg. He awoke to the importance of the occasion, and took some slight interest in the return of the royal young lady—even going so far as to follow the crowd to the railway station on the sunny June afternoon. His companions were two young fellows from the English bank and a rather agreeable attaché of the French Government.

He saw the Princess for the first time that afternoon, and he was bowled over, to use the expression of his English friends with whom he dined that night. She was the first woman that he had ever looked upon that he could describe, for she was the only one who had impressed him to that extent. This is how he pictured her at the American legation in Paris a few weeks later:

"Ever see her? Well, you've something to live for, gentlemen. I've seen her but three times and I don't seem able to shake off the spell. Her sisters, you know—the married ones—are nothing to look at, and the Grand Duke isn't a beauty by any means. How the deuce she happens to produce such a contrast I can't, for the life of me, understand. Nature does some marvellous things, by George, and she certainly spread herself on the Princess Genevra. You've never seen such hair. 'Gad, it's as near like the kind that Henner painted as anything human could be, except that it's more like old gold, if you can understand what I mean by that. Not bronze, mind you, nor the raw red, but—oh, well, I'm not a novelist, so I can't half-way describe it. She's rather tall —not too tall, mind *you*—five feet five, I'd say—what-

ever that is in the metric system. Slender and well dressed—oh, that's the strangest thing of all! Well dressed! Think of a princess being well dressed! I can see that you don't believe me, but I'll stake my word it's true. Of course, I've seen but three of her gowns and—but that's neither here nor there. I'd say she's twenty-two or twenty-three years of age—not a minute older. I think her eyes are a very dark grey, almost blue. Her skin is like a—a—oh, let me see, what is there that's as pure and soft as her skin? Something warm, and pink, and white, d'ye see? Well, never mind. And her smile! And her frown! You know, I've seen both of 'em, and one's as attractive as the other. She's a real princess, gentlemen, and the prettiest woman I've ever laid my eyes upon. And to think of her as the wife of that blithering little ass—that nincompoop of a Karl Brabetz! She loathes him, I'm sure—I *know* she does. And she's *got* to marry him! That's what she gets for being a Grand Duke's daughter. Brabetz is the heir apparent to some duchy or other over there and is supposed to be the catch of the season. You've heard of him. He was in Paris this season and cut quite a figure—a prince with real money in his purse, you know. I wonder why it is that our American girls can't marry the princes who have money instead of those who have none. Not that I wish any of our girls such bad luck as Brabetz! I'll stake my head he'll never forget me!" Chase concluded with a sharp, reflective laugh in which his hearers joined, for the escapade which inspired it was being slyly discussed in every embassy in Europe by this time, but no one seemed especially loth to shake Chase's hand on account of it.

But to return: the advent of the Princess put fresh life into the slowgoing city and court circles. Charming people, whom Chase had never seen before, seemed to

spring into existence suddenly; the streets took on a new air; the bands played with a keener zest and the army prinked itself into a most amazingly presentable shape. Officers with noble blood in their veins stepped out of the obscurity of months; swords clanked merrily instead of dragging slovenly at the heels of their owners; uniforms glistened with a new ambition, and the whole atmosphere of Thorberg underwent a change so startling that Chase could hardly believe his senses. He lifted up his chin, threw out his chest, banished the look of discontent from his face and announced to himself that Thorberg was not such a bad place after all.

For days he swung blithely through the streets, the hang-dog look gone from his eyes, always hoping for another glimpse of the fair sorceress who had worked the great transformation. He even went so far as to read the court society news in the local papers, and grew to envy the men whose names were mentioned in the same column with that of the fair Genevra. It was two weeks before he saw her the second time; he was more enchanted by her face than before, especially as he came to realise the astonishing fact that she was kind enough to glance in his direction from time to time.

It was during the weekly concert in the Kursaal, late one night. She came in with a party, among whom he recognised several of the leading personages at court.

Once a week the regular concert gave way to a function in which the royal orchestra was featured. On such occasions the attendance was extremely fashionable, the Duke and his court usually being present. It was not until this time, however, that Chase felt that he could sit through a concert without being bored to extinction. He loved music, but not the kind that the royal orchestra rendered; Wagner, Chopin, Mozart were all the same to him—he hated them *fervently* and he was not yet

given to stratagems and spoils. He sat at a table with the French attaché just below the box occupied by the Princess and her party. In spite of the fact that he was a gentleman, born and bred, he could not conquer countless impulses to look at the flower-face of the royal auditor. They were surreptitious and sidelong peeps, it is true, but they served him well. He caught her gaze bent upon him more than once, and he detected an interest in her look that pleased his vanity exceeding great.

Gradually the programme led up to the feature of the evening—the rendition of a great work under the direction of a famous leader, a special guest of the music-loving Duke.

Chase arose and cheered with the assemblage when the distinguished director made his appearance. Then he proceeded to forget the man and his genius—in fact everything save the rapt listener above him. She was leaning forward on the rail of the box, her chin in her hand, her eyes looking steadily ahead, enthralled by the music. Suddenly she turned and looked squarely into his eyes, as if impelled by the magnetism they unconsciously employed. A little flush mounted to her brow as she quickly resumed her former attitude. Chase cursed himself for a brainless lout.

The number came to an end and the crowd arose to cheer the bowing, smiling director. Chase cheered and shouted "bravo," too, because *she* was applauding as eagerly as the others. She called the flushed, bowing director to her box, and publicly thanked him for the pleasure he had given. Chase saw him kiss her hand as he murmured his gratitude. For the first time in his life he coveted the occupation of an orchestra leader.

The director was a frail, rather good-looking young man, with piercing black eyes that seemed too bold in

their scrutiny of the young lady's face. Chase began to hate him; he was unreasonably thankful when he passed on to the box in which the Duke sat.

The third and last time he saw the Princess Genevra before his sudden, spectacular departure from the Grand Duchy, was at the Duke's reception to the nobility of Rapp-Thorberg and to the representatives of such nations of the world as felt the necessity of having a man there in an official capacity.

CHAPTER IV

THE INDISCREET MR. CHASE

THERE was not a handsomer, more striking figure in the palace gardens on the night of the reception than Hollingsworth Chase, nor one whose poise proved that he knew the world quite as well as it is possible for any one man to know it. His was an unique figure, also, for he was easily distinguishable as the only American in the brilliant assemblage.

He was presented to the Princess late in the evening, together with Baggs of the British office. His pride and confidence received a severe shock. She glanced at him with unaffected welcome, but the air of one who was looking upon his face for the first time. It was not until he had spent a full hour in doleful self-commiseration, that his sense of worldliness came to his relief. In a flash, he was joyously convincing himself that her pose during the presentation was artfully—and very properly—assumed. He saw through it very plainly! How simple he had been! Of course, she could not permit him to feel that she had ever displayed the slightest interest in him! His spirits shot upward so suddenly that Baggs accused him of "negotiating a drink on the sly" and felt very much injured that he had been ignored.

The gardens of the palace were not unlike the stage setting of a great spectacle. The sleepy, stolid character of the court had been transformed, as if by magic. Chase wondered where all the pretty, vivacious women could have sprung from—and were these the officers of the Royal Guard that he had so often laughed at in disdain? Could that gay old gentleman in red and gold be the morbid, carelessly clad Duke of Rapp-Thorberg, whom he

had grown to despise because he seemed so ridiculously unlike a real potentate? He marvelled and rejoiced as he strolled hither and thither with the casual Baggs, and for the first time in his life really felt that it was pleasant to be stared at—in admiration, too, he may be pardoned for supposing.

He could not again approach within speaking distance of the Princess—nor did he presume to make the effort. Chase knew his proper place. It must be admitted, however, that he was never far distant from her, but perhaps chance was responsible for that—chance and Baggs, who, by nature, kept as close to royalty as the restrictions allowed.

She was the gayest, the most vivacious being in the whole assemblage; she had but to stretch out her hand or project her smile and every man in touch with the spell was ready to drop at her feet. At last, she led her court off toward the pavilion under which the royal orchestra was playing. As if it were a signal, every one turned his steps in that direction. Chase and the Englishman had been conversing diligently with an ancient countess and her two attractive daughters near the fountain. The Countess gave the command in the middle of Chase's dissertation on Italian cooking, and the party hastily fell in line with the throng which hurried forward.

"What is it? Supper again?" whispered Baggs, lugubriously.

One of the young women, doubtless observing the look of curiosity in the face of the American, volunteered the information that the orchestra was to repeat the great number which had so stirred the musical world at the concert the week before. Chase's look of despair was instantly banished by the recollection that the Princess had bestowed unqualified approval on the previous occasion. Hence, if she enjoyed it, he was determined to be pleased.

Again the dapper director came forward to lead the musicians, and again he was most enthusiastically received. His uniform fairly sparkled with the thrill of vanity, which seemed to burst from every seam; his sword clanked madly against his nimble legs as he bowed and scraped his grateful recognition of the honour. This time Chase was not where he could watch the Princess: he found, therefore, that he could devote his attention to the music and the popular conductor. He was amazed to find that the fellow seemed to be inspired; he was also surprised to find himself carried away by the fervour of the moment.

With the final crash of the orchestra, he found himself shouting again with the others; oddly, this time he was as mad as they. A score or more of surprised, disapproving eyes were turned upon him when he yelled "Encore!"

"There will be no encore," admonished the fair girl at his side, kindly. "It is not New York," she added, with a sly smile.

Ten minutes later, Chase and the Englishman were lighting their cigars in an obscure corner of the gardens, off in the shadows where the circle of light spent itself among the trees.

"Extraordinarily beautiful," Chase murmured reflectively, as he seated himself upon the stone railing along the drive.

"Yes, they say he really wrote it himself," drawled Baggs, puffing away.

"I'm not talking about the music," corrected Chase sharply.

"Oh," murmured Baggs, apologetically. "The night?"

"No! The Princess, Baggs. Haven't you noticed her?" with intense sarcasm in his tone.

"Of course, I have, old chap. By Jove, do you know she *is* goodlooking—positively ripping."

The concert over, people began strolling into the more distant corners of the huge garden, down the green-walled walks and across the moonlit terraces. For a long time, the two men sat moodily smoking in their dark nook, watching the occasional passers-by; listening to the subdued laughter and soft voices of the women, the guttural pleasantries of the men. They lazily observed the approach of one couple, attracted, no doubt, by the disparity in the height of the two shadows. The man was at least half a head shorter than his companion, but his ardour seemed a thousandfold more vast. Chase was amused by the apparent intensity of the small officer's devotion, especially as it was met with a coldness that would have chilled the fervour of a man much larger and therefore more timid. It was impossible to see the faces of the couple until they passed through a moonlit streak in the walk, quite close at hand.

Chase started and grasped his companion's arm. One was the Princess Genevra and—was it possible? Yes, the nimble conductor! The sensation of the hour—the musical lion! Moreover, to Chase's cold horror, the "little freak" was actually making violent love to the divinity of Rapp-Thorberg!

There was no doubt of it now. The Princess and her escort—the plebeian upstart—were quite near at hand, and, to the dismay of the smokers, apparently were unaware of their presence in the shadows. Chase's heart was boiling with disappointed rage. His idol had fallen, from a tremendous height to a depth which disgusted him.

Then transpired the thing which brought about Hollingsworth Chase's sudden banishment from Rapp-Thorberg, and came near to making him the laughing stock of the service.

The Princess had not seen the two men; nor had the fervent conductor, whose impassioned French was easily

distinguishable by the unwilling listeners. The sharp, indignant "no" of the Princess, oft repeated, did much to relieve the pain in the heart of her American admirer. Finally, with an unmistakable cry of anger, she halted not ten feet from where Chase sat, as though he had become a part of the stone rail. He could almost feel the blaze in her eyes as she turned upon the presumptuous conductor.

"I have asked you not to touch me, sir! Is not that enough? If you persist, I shall be compelled to appeal to my father again. The whole situation is loathsome to me. Are you blind? Can you not see that I despise you? I will not endure it a day longer. You promised to respect my wishes——"

"How can I respect a promise which condemns me to purgatory every time I see you?" he cried passionately. "I adore you. You are the queen of my life, the holder of my soul. Genevra, Genevra, I love you! My soul for one tender word, for one soft caress! Ah, do not be so cruel! I will be your slave——"

"Enough! Stop, I say! If you dare to touch me!" she cried, drawing away from her tormentor, her voice trembling with anger. The little conductor's manner changed on the instant. He gave a snarl of rage and despair combined as he raised his clenched hands in the air. For a moment words seemed to fail him. Then he cried out:

"By heaven, I'll make you pay for this some day! You shall learn what a man can do with a woman such as you are! You——"

Just at that moment a tall figure leaped from the shadows and confronted the quivering musician. A heavy hand fell upon his collar and he was almost jerked from his feet, half choked, half paralysed with alarm. Not a word was spoken. Chase whirled the presumptuous

suitor about until he faced the gates to the garden. Then, with more force than he realised, he applied his boot to the person of the offender—once, twice, thrice! The military jacket of the recipient of these attentions was of the abbreviated European pattern and the trousers were skin tight.

The Princess started back with a cry of alarm—ay, terror. The onslaught was so sudden, so powerless to avert, that it seemed like a visitation of wrath from above. She stared, wide-eyed and unbelieving, upon the brief tragedy; she saw her tormentor hurled viciously toward the gates and then, with new alarm, saw him pick himself up from the ground, writhing with pain and anger. His sword flashed from its scabbard as, with a scream of rage, he dashed upon the tall intruder. She saw Chase—even in the shadows she knew him to be the American—she saw Chase lightly leap aside, avoiding the thrust for his heart. Then, as if he were playing with a child, he wrested the weapon from the conductor's hand, snapped the blade in two pieces and threw them off into the bushes.

"Skip!" was his only word. It was a command that no one in Rapp-Thorberg ever had heard before.

"You shall pay for this!" screamed the conductor, tugging at his collar. "Scoundrel! Dog! Beast! What do you mean! Murderer! Robber! Assassin!"

"You know what I mean, you little shrimp!" roared Chase. "Skip! Don't hang around here a second longer or I'll—" and he took a threatening step toward his adversary. The latter was discreet, if not actually a coward. He turned tail and ran twenty paces or more in heartbreaking time; then, realising that he was not pursued, stopped and shook his fist at his assailant.

"Come, Genevra," he gasped, but she remained as if rooted to the spot. He waited an instant, and then walked rapidly away in the direction of the palace, his

back as straight as a ramrod, but his legs a trifle unsteady. The trio watched him for a full minute, speechbound now that the deed was done and the consequences were to be considered. Baggs grasped Chase by the shoulder, shook him and exclaimed, when it was too late:

"You blooming ass, do you know what you've done?"

"The da— miserable cur was annoying the Princess," muttered Chase, straightening his cuffs, vaguely realising that he had interfered too hastily.

"Confound it, man, he's the chap she's going to marry."

"Marry?" gasped Chase.

"The hereditary prince of Brabetz—Karl Brabetz."

"Good Lord!"

"You must have known."

"How the dev— Of course I didn't know," groaned Chase. "But hang it all, man, he was annoying her. She was flouting him for it. She said she despised him. I don't understand——"

The Princess came forward into the light of the path. There was a quaint little wrinkle of mirth about her lips, which trembled nevertheless, but her eyes were full of solicitude.

"I'm sorry, sir," she began nervously. "You have made a serious mistake. But," she added frankly, holding out her hand to him, "you meant to defend me. I thank you."

Chase bowed low over her hand, too bewildered to speak. Baggs was pulling at his mustache and looking nervously in the direction which the Prince had taken.

"He'll be back here with the guard," he muttered.

"He will go to my father," said Genevra, her voice trembling. "He will be very angry. I am sorry, indeed, that you should have witnessed our—our scene. Of course, you could not have known who he was——"

"I thought he was a—but in any event, your highness, he was annoying you," supplemented Chase eagerly.

"You *will* forgive me if I've caused you even greater, graver annoyance. What can I do to set the matter right? I can explain my error to the Duke. He'll understand——"

"Alas, he will not understand. He does not even understand me," she said meaningly. "Oh, I'm so sorry. It may—it will mean trouble for you." There was a catch in her voice.

"I'll fight him," murmured Chase, wiping his brow.

"Deuce take it, man, he won't fight you," said Baggs. "He's a prince, you know. He can't, you know. It's a beastly mess."

"Perhaps—perhaps you'd better go at once," said the Princess, rather pathetically. "My father will not overlook the indignity to—to my—to his future son-in-law. I am afraid he may take extreme measures. Believe me, I understand why you did it and I—again I thank you. I am not angry with you, yet you will understand that I cannot condone your kind fault."

"Forgive me," muttered the hapless Chase.

"It would not be proper in me to say that I could bless you for what you have done," she said, so naïvely that he lifted his eyes to hers and let his heart escape heavenward.

"The whole world will call me a bungling, stupid ass for not knowing who he was," said Chase, with a wretched smile.

Her face brightened after a moment, and an entrancing smile broke around her lips.

"If I were you, I'd never confess that I did not know who he was," she said. "Let the world think that you *did* know. It will not laugh, then. If you can trust your friend to keep the secret, I am sure you can trust me to do the same."

Again Chase was speechless—this time with joy. She would shield him from ridicule!

"And now, please go! It were better if you went at once. I am afraid the affair will not end with to-night. It grieves me to feel that I may be the unhappy cause of misfortune to you."

"No misfortune can appal me now," murmured he gallantly. Then came the revolting realisation that she was to wed the little musician. The thought burst from his lips before he could prevent: "I don't believe you want to marry him. He is the Duke's choice. You——"

"And I am the Duke's daughter," she said steadily, a touch of hauteur in her voice. "Good-night. Good-bye. I am not sorry that it has happened."

She turned and left them, walking swiftly among the trees. A moment later her voice came from the shadows, quick and pleading.

"Hasten," she called softly. "They are coming. I can see them."

Baggs grasped Chase by the arm and hurried him through the gate, past the unsuspecting sentry. They did not know that the Princess, upon meeting the soldiers, told them that the two men had gone toward the palace instead of out into the city streets. It gave them half an hour's start.

"It's a devil of a mess," sighed Baggs, when they were far from the walls. "The Duke may have you jugged, and it would serve you jolly well right."

"Now, see here, Baggs, none of that," growled Chase. "You'd have done the same thing if you hadn't been brought up to fall on your face before royalty. It will cost me my job here, but I'm glad I did it. Understand?"

"I'm sure it will cost you the job if nothing else. You'll be relieved before to-morrow night, my word for it. And you'll be lucky if that's all. The Duke's a terror. I

don't, for the life of me, see how you failed to know who the chap really is."

"An Englishman never sees a joke until it is too late, they say. This time it appears to be the American who is slow witted. What I don't understand is why he was leading that confounded band."

"My word, Chase, everybody in Europe—except you—knows that Brabetz is a crank about music. Composes, directs and all that. Over in Brabetz he supports the conservatory of music, written dozens of things for the orchestra, plays the pipe organ in the cathedral—all that sort of rot, you know. He's a confounded little bounder, just the same. He's mad about music and women and don't care a hang about wine. The worst kind, don't you know. I say, it's a rotten shame she has to marry him. But that's the way of it with royalty, old chap. You Americans don't understand it. They have to marry one another whether they like it or not. But, I say, you'd better come over and stop with me to-night. It will be better if they don't find you just yet."

Three days later, a man came down to relieve Chase of his office; he was unceremoniously supplanted in the Duchy of Rapp-Thorberg.

It was the successful pleading of the Princess Genevra that kept him from serving a period in durance vile.

CHAPTER V

THE ENGLISH INVADE

THE granddaughter of Jack Wyckholme, attended by two maids, her husband and his valet, a clerk from the chambers of Bosworth, Newnes & Grapewin, a red cocker, seventeen trunks and a cartload of late novels, which she had been too busy to read at home, was the first of the bewildered legatees to set foot upon the island of Japat. A rather sultry, boresome voyage across the Arabian Sea in a most unhappy steamer which called at Japat on its way to Sidney, depressed her spirits to some extent but not irretrievably.

She was very pretty, very smart and delightfully arrogant after a manner of her own. To begin with, Lady Agnes could see no sensible reason why she should be compelled to abandon a very promising autumn and winter at home, to say nothing of the following season, for the sake of protecting what was rightfully her own against the impudent claims of an unheard-of American.

She complacently informed her solicitors that it was all rubbish; they could arrange, if they would, without forcing her to take this abominable step. Upon reflection, however, and after Mr. Bosworth had pointed out the risk to her, she was ready enough to take the step, although still insisting that it was abominable.

Mr. Saunders was the polite but excessively middle-class clerk who went out to keep the legal strings untangled for them. He was soon to discover that his duties were even more comprehensive.

It was he who saw to it that the luggage was transferred to the lighter which came out to the steamer when she dropped anchor off the town of Aratat; it was he who

counted the pieces and haggled with the boatmen; it was he who carried off the hand luggage when the native dock boys refused to engage in the work; it was he who unfortunately dropped a suitcase upon the hallowed tail of the red cocker, an accident which ever afterward gave him a tenacity of grip that no man could understand; it was he who made all of the inquiries, did all of the necessary swearing, and came last in the procession which wended its indignant way up the long slope to the château on the mountain side.

If Lady Deppingham expected a royal welcome from the inhabitants of Japat, she was soon to discover her error. Not only was the pictured scene of welcome missing on the afternoon of her arrival, but an overpowering air of antipathy smote her in the face as she stepped from the lighter—conquest in her smile of conciliation. The attitude of the brown-faced Mohammedans who looked coldly upon the fair visitor was far from amiable. They did not fall down and bob their heads; they did not even incline them in response to her overtures. What was more trying, they glared at the newcomers in a most expressive manner. Lady Deppingham's chin was interrupted in its tilt of defiance by the shudder of alarm which raced through her slender figure. She glanced from right to left down the lines of swarthy islanders, and saw nothing in their faces but surly, bitter unfriendliness. They stood stolidly, stonily at a distance, white-robed lines of resentment personified.

Not a hand was lifted in assistance to the bewildered visitors; not a word, not a smile of encouragement escaped the lips of the silent throng.

Lady Agnes looked about eagerly in search of a white man's face, but there was none to be seen except in her own party. A moment of panic came to her as she stood there on the pier, almost alone, while Saunders and her

husband were engaged in the effort to secure help with the boxes. Behind her lay the friendly ocean; ahead the gorgeous landscape, smiling down upon her with the green glow of poison in its sunny face, dark treachery in its heart. On the instant she realised that these people were her enemies, and that they were the real masters of the island, after all. She found herself wondering whether they meant to settle the question of ownership then and there, before she could so much as set her foot upon the coveted soil at the end of the pier. A hundred knives might hack her to pieces, but even as she shuddered a rush of true British doggedness warmed her blood; after all, she was there to fight for her rights and she would stand her ground. Almost before she realised, the dominant air of superiority which characterises her nation, no matter whither its subjects may roam, crept out above her brief touch of timidity, and she found that she could stare defiantly into the swarthy ranks.

"Is there no British agent here?" she demanded imperatively, perhaps a little more shrilly than usual.

No one deigned to answer; glances of indifference, even scorn, passed among the silent lookers-on, but that was all. It was more than her pride could endure. Her smooth cheeks turned a deeper pink and her blue eyes flashed.

"Does no one here understand the English language?" she demanded. "I don't mean you, Mr. Saunders," she added sharply, as the little clerk set the suitcase down abruptly and stepped forward, again fumbling his much-fumbled straw hat. This was the moment when the red cocker's tail came to grief. The dog arose with an astonished yelp and fled to his mistress; he had never been so outrageously set upon before in all his pampered life. Seizing the opportunity to vent her feelings upon

one who could understand, even as she poured soothings upon the insulted Pong, whom she clasped in her arms, Lady Agnes transformed the unlucky Saunders into a target for a most ably directed volley of wrath. The shadow of a smile swept down the threatening row of dark faces.

Lord Deppingham, a slow and cumbersome young man, stood by nervously fingering his eye-glass. For the first time he felt that the clerk was better than a confounded dog, after all. He surprised every one, his wife most of all, by coolly interfering, not particularly in defence of the clerk but in behalf of the Deppingham dignity.

"My dear," he said, waving Saunders into the background, "I think it was an accident. The dog had no business going to sleep—" he paused and inserted his monocle for the purpose of looking up the precise spot where the accident had occurred.

"He wasn't asleep," cried his wife.

"Then, my dear, he has positively no excuse to offer for getting his tail in the way of the bag. If he was awake and didn't have sense enough——"

"Oh, rubbish!" exclaimed her ladyship. "I suppose you expect the poor darling to apologise."

"All this has nothing to do with the case. We're more interested in learning where we are and where we are to go. Permit me to have a look about."

His wife stared after him in amazement as he walked over to the canvas awning in front of the low dock building, actually elbowing his way through a group of natives. Presently he came back, twisting his left mustache.

"The fellow in there says that the English agent is employed in the bank. It's straight up this street—by Jove, he called it a street, don't you know," he exclaimed, disdainfully eyeing the narrow, dusty passage

ahead. Here and there a rude house or shop stood directly ahead in the middle of the thoroughfare, with happy disregard for effect or convenience.

"There's the British flag, my lord, just ahead. See the building to the right, sir?" said Mr. Saunders, more respectfully than ever and with real gratitude in his heart.

"So it is! That's where he is. I wonder why he isn't down here to meet us."

"Very likely he didn't know we were coming," said his wife icily.

"Well, we'll look him up. Come along, everybody—Oh, I say, we can't leave this luggage unguarded. They say these fellows are the worst robbers east of London."

It was finally decided, after a rather subdued discussion, that Mr. Saunders should proceed to the bank and rout out the dilatory representative of the British Government. Saunders looked down the sullen line of faces, and blanched to his toes. He hemmed and hawed and said something about his mother, which was wholly lost upon the barren waste that temporarily stood for a heart in Lord Deppingham's torso.

"Tell him we'll wait here for him," pursued his lordship. "But remind him, damn him, that it's inexpressibly hot down here in the sun."

They stood and watched the miserable Saunders tread gingerly up the filthy street, his knees crooking outwardly from time to time, his toes always touching the ground first, very much as if he were contemplating an instantaneous sprint in any direction but the one he was taking. Even the placid Deppingham was somewhat disturbed by the significant glances that followed their emissary as he passed by each separate knot of natives. He was distinctly dismayed when a dozen or more of the dark-faced watchers wandered slowly off after Mr.

Saunders. It was clearly observed that Mr. Saunders stepped more nimbly after he became aware of this fact.

"I do hope Mr. Saunders will come back alive," murmured Bromley, her ladyship's maid. The others started, for she had voiced the general thought.

"He won't come back at all, Bromley, unless he comes back alive," said his lordship with a smile. It was a well-known fact that he never smiled except when his mind was troubled.

"Goodness, Deppy," said his wife, recognising the symptom, "do you really think there is danger?"

"My dear Aggy, who said there was any danger?" he exclaimed, and quickly looked out to sea. "I rather think we'll enjoy it here," he added after a moment's pause, in which he saw that the steamer was getting under way. The Japat company's tug was returning to the pier. Lord Deppingham sighed and then drew forth his cigarette case. "There!" he went on, peering intently up the street. "Saunders is gone."

"Gone?" half shrieked her ladyship.

"Into the bank," he added, scratching a match.

"Deppy," she said after a moment, "I hope I was not too hard on the poor fellow."

"Perhaps you won't be so nervous if you sit down and look at the sea," he said gently, and she immediately knew that he suggested it because he expected a tragedy in the opposite direction. She dropped Pong without another word, and, her face quite serious, seated herself upon the big trunk which he selected. He sat down beside her, and together they watched the long line of smoke far out at sea.

They expected every minute to hear the shouts of assassins and the screams of the brave Mr. Saunders. Their apprehensions were sensibly increased by the mysterious actions of the half-naked loiterers. They

seemed to consult among themselves for some time after the departure of the clerk, and then, to the horror of the servants, made off in various directions, more than one of them handling his ugly kris in an ominous manner. Bromley was not slow to acquaint his lordship with these movements. Deppingham felt a cold chill shoot up his spine, and he cleared his throat as if to shout after the disappearing steamer. But he maintained a brave front, or, more correctly, a brave back, for he refused to encourage the maid's fears by turning around.

It was broiling hot in the sun, but no one thought of the white umbrellas. Saunders was the epitome of every thought.

"Here he comes!" shouted the valet, joyously forgetting his station. His lordship still stared at the sea. Lady Deppingham's little jaws were shut tight and her fingers were clenched desperately in the effort to maintain the proper dignity before her servants.

"Your lordship," said Mr. Saunders, three minutes later, "this is Mr. Bowles, his Majesty's agent here. He is come with me to——"

It was then and not until then that his lordship turned his stare from the sea to the clerk and his companion.

"Aw," he interrupted, "glad to see you, I'm sure. Would you be good enough to tell us how we are to reach the—er—château, and why the devil we can't get anybody to move our luggage?"

Mr. Bowles, who had lived in Japat for sixteen years, was a tortuously slow Englishman with the curse of the clime still growing upon him. He was half asleep quite a good bit of the time, and wholly asleep during the remainder. A middle-aged man was he, yet he looked sixty. He afterward told Saunders that it seemed to take two days to make one in the beastly climate; that was why he was misled into putting off everything until the second

day. The department had sent him out long ago at the request of Mr. Wyckholme; he had lost the energy to give up the post.

"Mr.—er—Mr. Saunders, my lord, has told me that you have been unable to secure assistance in removing your belongings—" he began politely, but Deppingham interrupted him.

"Where is the château? Are there no vans to be had?"

"Everything is transferred by hand, my lord, and the château is two miles farther up the side of the mountain. It's quite a walk, sir."

"Do you mean to say we are to walk?"

"Yes, my lord, if you expect to go there."

"Of course, we expect to go there. Are there no horses on the beastly island?"

"Hundreds, my lord, but they belong to the people and no one but their owners ride them. One can't take them by the hour, you know. The servants at the château turned Mr. Skaggs's horses out to pasture before they left."

"Before who left?"

"The servants, my lord."

Lady Deppingham's eyes grew wide with understanding.

"You don't mean to say that the servants have left the place?" she cried.

"Yes, my lady. They were natives, you know."

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded Deppingham.

"I'm afraid you don't understand the situation," said Mr. Bowles patiently. "You see, it's really a triangular controversy, if I may be so bold as to say so. Lady Deppingham is one of the angles; Mr. Browne, the American gentleman, is another; the native population is the last. Each wants to be the hypothenuse. While the

interests of all three are merged in the real issue, there is, nevertheless, a decided disposition all around to make it an entirely one-sided affair."

"I don't believe I grasp—" muttered Deppingham blankly.

"I see perfectly," exclaimed his wife. "The natives are allied against us, just as we are, in a way, against them and Mr. Browne. Really, it seems quite natural, doesn't it, dear?" turning to her husband.

"Very likely, but very unfortunate. It leaves us to broil our brains out down here on this pier. I say, Mr.—er—old chap, can't you possibly engage some sort of transportation for us? Really, you know, we can't stand here all day."

"I've no doubt I can arrange it, my lord. If you will just wait here until I run back to the bank, I daresay I'll find a way. Perhaps you'd prefer standing under the awning until I return."

The new arrivals glowered after him as he started off toward the bank. Then they moved over to the shelter of the awning.

"Did he say he was going to run?" groaned his lordship. The progress of Bowles rivalled that of the historic tortoise.

It was fully half an hour before he was seen coming down the street, followed by a score or more of natives, their dirty white robes flapping about their brown legs. At first they could not believe it was Bowles. Lord Deppingham had a sharp thrill of joy, but it was short-lived. Bowles had changed at least a portion of his garb; he now wore the tight red jacket of the British trooper, while an ancient army cap was strapped jauntily over his ear.

"It's all right, my lord," he said, saluting as he came up. "They will do anything I tell 'em to do when I

represent the British army. This is the only uniform on the island, but they've been taught that there are more where this one came from. These fellows will carry your boxes up to the château, sixpence to the man, if you please, sir; and I've sent for two carts to draw your party up the slope. They'll be here in a jiffy, my lady. You'll find the drive a beautiful if not a comfortable one." Then turning majestically to the huddled natives, he waved his slender stick over the boxes, big and little, and said: "Lively, now! No loafing! Lively!"

Whereupon the entire collection of boxes, bags and bundles figuratively picked itself up and walked off in the direction of the château. Bowles triumphantly saluted Lord and Lady Deppingham. The former had a longing look in his eye as he stared at Bowles and remarked:

"I wish I had a troop of real Tommy Atkinses out here, by Jove."

CHAPTER VI

THE CHÂTEAU

THE road to the château took its devious way through the little town—out into the green foothill beyond. Two lumbering, wooden wheeled carts, none too clean, each drawn by four perspiring men, served as conveyances by which the arrivals were to make the journey to their new home. Mr. Bowles informed his lordship that horses were not submitted to the indignity of drawing carts. The lamented Mr. Skaggs had driven his own Arab steeds to certain fashionable traps, but the natives never thought of doing such a thing.

Lady Deppingham's pert little nose lifted itself in disgust as she was joggled through the town behind the grunting substitutes for horseflesh. She sat beside her husband in the foremost cart. Mr. Bowles, very tired, but quite resplendent, walked dutifully beside one wheel; Mr. Saunders took his post at the other. It might have been noticed that the latter cut a very different figure from that which he displayed on his first invasion of the street earlier in the day. The servants came along behind in the second cart. Far ahead, like hounds in full cry, toiled the unwilling luggage bearers. From the windows and doorways of every house, from the bazaars and cafés, from the side streets and mosque-approaches, the gaze of the sullen populace fastened itself upon the little procession. The town seemed ominously silent. Deppingham looked again and again at the red coat on the sloping shoulders of their guardian, and marvelled not a little at the vastness of the British dominion. He recalled his red hunting coat in one of the bags ahead, and mentally resolved to wear it on all occasions—

perhaps going so far as to cut off its tails if necessary.

At last they came to the end of the sunlit street and plunged into the shady road that ascended the slope through what seemed to be an absolutely unbroken though gorgeous jungle. The cool green depths looked most alluring to the sun-baked travellers; they could almost imagine that they heard the dripping of fountains, the gurgling of rivulets, so like paradise was the prospect ahead. Lady Agnes could not restrain her cries of delighted amazement.

"It's like this all over the island, your ladyship," volunteered Mr. Bowles, mopping his brow in a most unmilitary way. "Except at the mines and back there in the town."

"Where are the mines?" asked Deppingham.

"The company's biggest mines are seven or eight miles eastward, as the crow flies, quite at the other side of the island. It's very rocky over there and there's no place for a landing from the sea. Everything is brought overland to Aratat and placed in the vaults of the bank. Four times a year the rubies and sapphires are shipped to the brokers in London and Paris and Vienna. It's quite a neat and regular arrangement, sir."

"But I should think the confounded natives would steal everything they got their hands on."

"What would be the use, sir? They couldn't dispose of a single gem on the island, and nothing is taken away from here except in the company's chests. Besides, my lord, these people are not thieves. They are absolutely honest. Smugglers have tried to bribe them, and the smugglers have never lived to tell of it. They may kill people occasionally, but they are quite honest, believe me. And, in any event, are they not a part of the great corporation? They have their share in the working of the

mines and in the profits. Mr. Wyckholme and Mr. Skaggs were honest with them and they have been just as honest in return."

"Sounds very attractive," muttered Deppingham sceptically.

"I should think they'd be terribly tempted," said Lady Agnes. "They look so wretchedly poor."

"They *are* a bit out at the knees," said her husband, with a great laugh.

"My lady," said Bowles, "there are but four poor men on the island: myself and the three Englishmen who operate the bank. There isn't a poor man, woman or child among the natives. This is truly a land of rich men. The superintendent of the mines is a white man—a German—and the three foremen are Boers. They work on shares just as the natives do and save even more, I think. The clerical force is entirely native. There were but ten white men here before you came, including two Greeks. There are no beggars. Perhaps you noticed that no one was asking for alms as you came up."

"'Gad, I should say we did," exclaimed Deppingham ruefully. "There wasn't even a finger held out to us. But is this a holiday on the island?"

"A holiday, my lord?"

"Yes. No one seems to be at work."

"Oh? I see. Being part owners the natives have decided that four hours constitutes a day's work. They pay themselves accordingly, as it were. No one works after midday, sir."

"I say, wouldn't this be a paradise for the English workingman?" said Deppingham. "That's the kind of a day's labor they'd like. Do you mean to say that these fellows trudge eight miles to work every morning and back again at noon?"

"Certainly not, sir. They ride their thoroughbred

horses to work and ride them back again. It's much better than omnibuses or horse cars, I'd say, sir—as I remember them."

"You take my breath away," said the other, lapsing into a stunned silence.

The road had become so steep and laborious by this time that Bowles was very glad to forego the pleasure of talking. He fell back, with Mr. Saunders, and ultimately both of them climbed into the already overloaded second cart, adding much to the brown man's burden. After regaining his breath to some extent, the obliging Mr. Bowles, now being among what he called the lower classes, surreptitiously removed the tight-fitting red jacket, and proceeded to give the inquisitive lawyer's clerk all the late news of the island.

The inhabitants of Japat, standing upon their rights as part owners of the mines and as prospective heirs to the entire fortune of Messrs. Skaggs and Wyckholme, had been prompt to protect themselves in a legal sense. They had leagued themselves together as one interest and had engaged the services of eminent solicitors in London, who were to represent them in the final settlement of the estate. London was to be the battle ground in the coming conflict. A committee of three had journeyed to England to put the matter in the hands of these lawyers and were now returning to the island with a representative of the firm, who was coming out to stand guard, so to speak. Von Blitz, the German superintendent, was the master mind in the native contingent. It was he who planned and developed the course of action. The absent committee was composed of Ben Adi, Abdallah Ben Sabbat and Rasula, the Aratat lawyer. They were truly wise men from the East—old, shrewd, crafty and begotten of Mahomet.

The mines continued to be operated as usual, pending

the arrival of the executors' representative, who, as we know, was now on the ground in the person of Thomas Saunders. The fact that he also served as legal adviser to Lady Deppingham was not of sufficient moment to disturb the arrangements on either side. Every one realised that he could have no opportunity to exercise a prejudice, if he dared to have one. Saunders blinked his eyes nervously when Bowles made this pointed observation.

As for the American heir, Robert Browne, he had not yet arrived. He was coming by steamer from the west, according to report, and was probably on the *Boswell*, Sumatra to Madagascar, due off Aratat in two or three days. Mr. Bowles jocosely inferred that it should be a very happy family at the château, with the English and American heirs ever ready to heave things at one another, regardless of propriety or the glassware.

"The islanders," said Mr. Bowles, lighting a cigarette, "it looks to me, have all the best of the situation. They get the property whether they marry or not, while the original beneficiaries have to marry each other or get off the island at the end of the year. Most of the islanders have got three or four wives already. I daresay the legators took that into consideration when they devised the will. Von Blitz, the German, has three and is talking of another."

"You mean to say that they can have as many wives as they choose?" demanded Saunders, wrinkling his brow.

"Yes, just so long as they don't choose anybody else's."

Saunders was buried in thought for a long time, then he exclaimed, unconsciously aloud:

"My word!"

"Eh?" queried Bowles, arousing himself.

"I didn't say anything," retorted Saunders, looking up into the tree tops.

In the course of an hour—a soft, sleepy hour, too, despite the wondrous novelty of the scene and the situation—the travellers came into view of the now famous château.

Standing out against the sky, fully a mile ahead, was the home to which they were coming. The château, beautiful as a picture, lifted itself like a dream castle above all that was earthly and sordid; it smiled down from its lofty terrace and glistened in the sunset glow, like the jewel that had been its godmother. Long and low, scolloped by its gables, parapets and budding towers, the vast building gleamed red against the blue sky from one point of view and still redder against the green mountain from another. Soft, rich reds—not the red of blood, but of the unpolished ruby—seemed to melt softly in the eye as one gazed upward in simple wonder. The dream house of two lonely old men who had no place where they could spend their money!

According to its own records, the château, fashioned quite closely after a famous structure in France, was designed and built by La Marche, the ill-fated French architect who was lost at sea in the wreck of the *Vendome*. Three years and more than seven hundred thousand pounds sterling, or to make it seem more prodigious, nearly eighteen million francs, were consumed in its building. An army of skilled artisans had come out from France and Austria to make this quixotic dream a reality before the two old men should go into their dreamless sleep; to say nothing of the slaving, faithful islanders who laboured for love in the great undertaking. Specially chartered ships had carried material and men to the island—and had carried the men away again, for not one of them remained behind after the completion of the job.

There was not a contrivance or a convenience known to

modern architecture that was not included in the construction of this latter-day shadow of antiquity.

It was, to step on ahead of the story as politely as possible, fully a week before Lord and Lady Deppingham realised all that their new home meant in the way of scientific improvement and, one might say, research. It was so spacious, so comprehensive of domain, so elaborate, that one must have been weeks in becoming acquainted with its fastnesses, if that word may be employed. To what uses Taswell Skaggs and John Wyckholme could have put this vast, though splendid waste, the imagination cannot grasp. Apartments fit for a king abounded; suites which took one back to the luxuries of Marie Antoinette were common; banquet halls, ball rooms, reception halls, a chapel, and even a crypt were to be found if one undertook a voyage of discovery. Perhaps it is safe to say that none of these was ever used by the original owners, with the exception of the crypt; John Wyckholme reposed there, alone in his dignity, undisturbed by so little as the ghost of a tradition.

The terrace, wide and beautiful, was the work of a famous landscape gardener. Engineers had come out from England to install the most complete water and power plant imaginable. Not only did they bring water up from the sea, but they turned the course of a clear mountain stream so that it virtually ran through the pipes and faucets of the vast establishment. The fountains rivalled in beauty those at Versailles, though not so extensive; the artificial lake, while not built in a night, as one other that history mentions, was quite as attractive. Water mains ran through miles of the tropical forest and, no matter how great the drouth, the natives kept the verdure green and fresh with a constancy that no real wage-earner could have exercised. As to the stables, they might have aroused envy in the soul of any sporting monarch.

It was a palace, but they had called it a château, because Skaggs stubbornly professed to be democratic. The word palace meant more to him than château, although opinions could not have mattered much on the island of Japat. Inasmuch as he had not, to his dying day, solved the manifold mysteries of the structure, it is not surprising that he never developed sufficient confidence to call it other than "the place."

Now and then, officers from some British man-of-war stopped off for entertainment in the château, and it was only on such occasions that Skaggs realised what a gorgeously beautiful home it was that he lived in. He had seen Windsor Castle in his youth, but never had he seen anything so magnificent as the crystal chandelier in his own hallway when it was fully lighted for the benefit of the rarely present guests. On the occasion of his first view of the chandelier in its complete glory, it is said that he walked blindly against an Italian table of solid marble and was in bed for eleven days with a bruised hip. The polished floors grew to be a horror to him. He could not enumerate the times their priceless rugs had slipped aimlessly away from him, leaving him floundering in profane wrath upon the glazed surface. The bare thought of crossing the great ballroom was enough to send him into a perspiration. He became so used to walking stiff-legged on the hardwood floors that it grew to be a habit which would not relax. The servants were authority for the report, that no earlier than the day before his death, he slipped and fell in the dining-room, and thereupon swore that he would have Portland cement floors put in before Christmas.

Lord and Lady Deppingham, being first in the field, at once proceeded to settle themselves in the choicest rooms —a Henry the Sixth suite which looked out on the sea and the town as well. It is *said* that Wyckholme slept

there twice, while Skaggs looked in perhaps half a dozen times—when he was lost in the building, and trying to find his way back to familiar haunts.

There was not a sign of a servant about the house or grounds. The men whom Bowles had engaged, carried the luggage to the rooms which Lady Deppingham selected, and then vanished as if into space. They escaped while the new tenants were gorging their astonished, bewildered eyes with the splendors of the apartment.

"We'll have to make the best of it," sighed Deppingham in response to his wife's lamentations. "I daresay, Antoine and the maids can get our things into some sort of shape, my dear. What say to a little stroll about the grounds while they are doing it? By Jove, it would be exciting if we were to find a ruby or two. Saunders says they are as common as strawberries in July."

Mr. Bowles, who had resumed his coat of red, joined them in the stroll about the gardens, pointing out objects of certain interest and telling the cost of each to the penny.

"I can't conduct you through the château," he apologised as they were returning after the short tour. "They can't close the bank until I set the balance sheet, sir, and it's now two hours past closing time. It doesn't matter, however, my lord," he added hastily, "we enjoy anything in the shape of a diversion."

"See here, Mr.—er—old chap, what are we to do about servants? We can't get on without them, you know."

"Oh, the horses are being well cared for in the valley, sir. You needn't worry a bit——"

"Horses! What we want, is to be cared for ourselves. Damn the horses," roared his lordship.

"They say these Americans are a wonderful people, my lord," ventured Mr. Bowles. "I daresay when Mr. and *Mrs.* Browne arrive, they'll have some way of——"

"Browne!" cried her ladyship. "This very evening I shall give orders concerning the rooms they are to occupy. And that reminds me: I must look the place over thoroughly before they arrive. I suppose, however, that the rooms we have taken *are* the best?"

"The choicest, my lady," said Bowles, bowing.

"See here, Mr.—er—old chap, don't you think you can induce the servants to come back to us? By Jove, I'll make it worth your while. The place surely must need cleaning up a bit. It's some months since the old—since Mr. Skaggs died." He always said "Skaggs" after a scornful pause and in a tone as disdainfully nasal as it was possible for him to produce.

"Not at all, my lord. The servants did not leave the place until your steamer was sighted this morning. It's as clean as a pin."

"This morning?"

"Yes, my lord. They would not desert the château until they were sure you were on board. They were extraordinarily faithful."

"I don't see it that way, leaving us like this. What's to become of the place? Can't I get an injunction, or whatever you call it?"

"What *are* we to do?" wailed Lady Agnes, sitting down suddenly upon the edge of a fountain.

"You see, my lady, they take the position that you have no right here," volunteered Bowles.

"How absurd! I am heir to every foot of this island——"

"They are very foolish about it I'm sure. They've got the ridiculous idea into their noddles that you can't be the heiress unless Lord Deppingham passes away inside of a year, and——"

"I'm damned if I do!" roared the perspiring obstacle, "I'm not so obliging as that, let me tell you. If it comes

to that, what sort of an ass do they think I'd be to come away out here to pass away? London's good enough for any man to die in."

"You are not going to die, Deppy," said his wife consolingly. "Unless you starve to death," she supplemented with an expressive moue.

"I daresay you'll find a quantity of tinned meats and vegetables in the storehouse, my lady. You can't starve until the supply gives out. American tinned meats," vouchsafed Mr. Bowles with his best English grimace.

"Come along, Aggy," said her liege lord resignedly. "Let's have a look about the place."

Mr. Saunders met them at the grand entrance. He announced that four of the native servants had been found, dead drunk, in the wine cellar.

"They can't move, sir. We thought they were dead."

"Keep 'em in that condition, for the good Lord's sake," exclaimed Deppingham. "We'll make sure of four servants, even if we have to keep 'em drunk for six months."

"Good day, your lordship—my lady," said Bowles, edging away. "Perhaps I can intercede for you when their solicitor comes on. He's due to-morrow, I hear. It is possible that he may advise at least a score of the servants to return."

"Send him up to me as soon as he lands," commanded Deppingham calmly.

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Bowles.

CHAPTER VII

THE BROWNES ARRIVE

CONTRARY to all expectations, the Brownes arrived the next morning. The Deppinghams and their miserably frightened servants were scarcely out of bed when Saunders came in with the news that a steamer was standing off the shallow harbour. Bowles had telephoned up that the American claimant was on board.

Lady Agnes and her husband had not slept well. They heard noises from one end of the night to the other, and they were most unusual noises at that. The maids had flatly refused to sleep in the servants' wing, fully a block away, so they were given the next best suite of rooms on the floor, quite cutting off every chance the Brownes may have had for choice of apartments. Pong howled all night long, but his howls were as nothing compared to the screams of night birds in the trees close by.

The deepest gloom pervaded the household when Lady Deppingham discovered that not one of their retinue knew how to make coffee or broil bacon. Not that she cared for bacon, but that his lordship always asked for it when they did not have it. The evening before they had philosophically dined on tinned food. She brewed a delightful tea, and Antoine opened three or four kinds of wine. Altogether it was not so bad. But in the morning! Everything looked different in the morning. Everything always does, one way or another.

Bromley upset the last peg of endurance by hoping that the Americans were bringing a cook and a housemaid with them.

"The Americans always travel like lords," she con-

cluded, forgetting that she served a lord, and not in the least intending to be ironical.

"That will do, Bromley," said her mistress sharply. "If they're like most Americans I've seen they'll have nothing but wet nurses and chauffeurs. I can't eat this vile stuff." She had already burned her fingers and dropped a slice of beechnut bacon on her sweet little morning gown. "Come on, Deppy; let's go up and watch the approach of the enemy."

Dolefully they passed out of the culinary realm; it is of record that they never looked into it from that hour forth. On the broad, vine-covered gallery they sat in dour silence and in silence took turns with Deppy's binoculars in the trying effort to make out what was going on in the offing. The company's tug seemed unusually active. It bustled about the big steamer with an industriousness that seemed almost frantic. The laziness that had marked its efforts of the day before was amazingly absent. At last they saw it turn for the shore, racing inward with a great churning of waves and a vast ado in its smokestack.

From their elevated position, the occupants of the gallery could see the distant pier. When the tug drew up to its moorings, the same motionless horde of white-robed natives lined up along the dock building. Trunks, boxes and huge crated objects were hustled off the boat with astonishing rapidity. Deppingham stared hard and unbelieving at this evidence of haste.

Five or six strangers stood upon the pier, very much as their party had stood the day before. There were four women and—yes, two men. The men seemed to be haranguing the natives, although no gesticulations were visible. Suddenly there was a rush for the trunks and boxes and crates, and, almost before the Lady Agnes could catch the breath she had lost, the whole

troupe was hurrying up the narrow street, luggage and all. The once-sullen natives seemed to be fighting for the privilege of carrying something. A half dozen of them dashed hither and thither and returned with great umbrellas, which they hoisted above the heads of the newcomers. Lady Agnes sank back, faint with wonder, as the concourse lost itself among the houses of the agitated town.

Scarcely half an hour passed before the advance guard of the Browne company came into view at the park gates below. Deppingham recalled the fact that an hour and a half had been consumed in the accomplishment yesterday. He was keeping a sharp lookout for the magic red jacket and the Tommy Atkins lid. Quite secure from observation, he and his wife watched the forerunners with the hand bags; then came the sweating trunk bearers and then the crated objects in—what? Yes, by the Lord Harry, in the very carts that had been their private chariots the day before!

Deppingham's wrath did not really explode until the two were gazing openmouthed upon Robert Browne and his wife and his maidservants and his ass—for that was the name which his lordship subsequently applied, with no moderation, to the unfortunate gentleman who served as Mr. Browne's attorney. The Americans were being swiftly, cozily carried to their new home in litters of oriental comfort and elegance, fanned vigorously from both sides by eager boys. First came the Brownes, eager-faced, bright-eyed, alert young people, far better looking than their new enemies could conscientiously admit under the circumstances; then the lawyer from the States; then a pert young lady in a pink shirt waist and a sailor hat; then two giggling, utterly un-English maids—and all of them lolling in luxurious ease. The red jacket was conspicuously absent.

It is not to be wondered at that his lordship looked at his wife, gulped in sympathy, and then said something memorable.

Almost before they could realise what had happened, the newcomers were chattering in the spacious halls below, tramping about the rooms, and giving orders in high, though apparently efficacious voices. Trunks rattled about the place, barefooted natives shuffled up and down the corridors and across the galleries, quick American heels clattered on the marble stairways; and all this time the English occupants sat in cold silence, despising the earth and all that therein dwelt.

Mr. and Mrs. Browne evidently believed in the democratic first principles of their native land: they did not put themselves above their fellow-man. Close at their heels trooped the servants, all of whom took part in the discussion incident to fresh discoveries. At last they came upon the great balcony, pausing just outside the French windows to exclaim anew in their delight.

"Great!" said the lawyer man, after a full minute. He was not at all like Mr. Saunders, who looked on from an obscure window in the distant left. "Finest I've ever seen. Isn't it a picture, Browne?"

"Glorious," said young Mr. Browne, taking a long breath. The Deppinghams, sitting unobserved, saw that he was a tall, good-looking fellow. They were unconscionably amused when he suddenly reached out and took his wife's hand in his big fingers. Her face was flushed with excitement, her eyes were wide and sparkling. She was very trim and cool-looking in her white duck; moreover, she was of the type that looks exceedingly attractive in evening dress—at least, that was Deppingham's innermost reflection. It was not until after many weeks had passed, however, that Lady Agnes admitted that Drusilla Browne was a very pretty young woman.

"Most American women are, after a fashion," she then confessed to Deppingham, and not grudgingly.

"What does Baedeker say about it, Bobby?" asked Mrs. Browne. Her voice was very soft and full—the quiet, well-modulated Boston voice and manner.

"Baedeker?" whispered Deppingham, passing his hand over his brow in bewilderment. His wife was looking serenely in the opposite direction.

The pert girl in the pink waist opened a small portfolio while the others gathered around her. She read therefrom. The lawyer, when she had concluded, drew a compass from his pocket, and, walking over to the stone balustrade, set it down for observation. Then he pointed vaguely into what proved to be the southwest.

"We must tell Lady Deppingham not to take the rooms at this end," was the next thing that the listeners heard from Mrs. Browne's lips. Her ladyship turned upon her husband with a triumphant sniff and a knowing smile.

"What did I tell you?" she whispered. "I knew they'd want the best of everything. Isn't it lucky I pounced upon those rooms? They shan't turn us out. You won't let 'em, will you, Deppy?"

"The impudence of 'em!" was all that Deppy could sputter.

At that moment, the American party caught sight of the pair in the corner. For a brief space of time the two parties stared at each other, very much as the hunter and the hunted look when they come face to face without previous warning. Then a friendly, half-abashed smile lighted Browne's face. He came toward the Depphams, his straw hat in his hand. His lordship retained his seat and met the smile with a cold stare of superiority.

"I beg your pardon," said Browne. "This is Lord Deppingham?"

"Ya-as," drawled Deppy, with a look which was meant to convey the impression that he did not know who the deuce he was addressing.

"Permit me to introduce myself. I am Robert Browne."

"Oh," said Deppy, as if that did not convey anything to him. Then as an afterthought: "Glad to know you, I'm sure." Still he did not rise, nor did he extend his hand. For a moment young Browne waited, a dull red growing in his temples.

"Don't you intend to present me to Lady Deppingham?" he demanded bluntly, without taking his eyes from Deppy's face.

"Oh—er—is that necess——"

"Lady Deppingham," interrupted Browne, turning abruptly from the man in the chair and addressing the lady in azure blue who sat on the balustrade, "I am Robert Browne, the man you are expected to marry. Please don't be alarmed. You won't have to marry me. Our grandfathers did not observe much ceremony in mating us, so I don't see why we should stand upon it in trying to convince them of their error. We are here for the same purpose, I suspect. We can't be married to each other. That's out of the question. But we can live together as if we——"

"Good Lord!" roared Deppy, coming to his feet in a towering rage. Browne smiled apologetically and lifted his hand.

"—as if we were serving out the prescribed period of courtship set down in the will. Believe me, I am very happily married, as I hope you are. The courtship, you will perceive, is neither here nor there. Please bear with me, Lord Deppingham. It's the silly will that brings us together, not an affinity. Our every issue is identical, Lady Deppingham. Doesn't it strike you that we will be very foolish if we stand alone and against each other?"

"'Don't you intend to present me to Lady Depping*ham?*'"

THE NEW YORK

"My solicitor—" began Lady Deppingham, and then stopped. She was smiling in spite of herself. This frank, breezy way of putting it had not offended her, after all, much to her surprise.

"Your solicitor and mine can get together and talk it over," said Browne blandly. "We'll leave it to them. I simply want you to know that I am not here for the purpose of living at swords' points with you. I am quite ready to be a friendly ally, not a foe."

"Let me understand you," began Deppingham, cooling off suddenly. "Do you mean to say that you are not going to fight us in this matter?"

"Not at all, your lordship," said Browne coolly. "I am here to fight Taswell Skaggs and John Wyckholme, deceased. I imagine, if you'll have a talk with your solicitor, that that is precisely what you are here for, too. As next nearest of kin, I think both of us will run no risk if we smash the will. If we don't smash it, the islanders will cheerfully take the legacy off our hands."

"By Jove," muttered Deppy, looking at his wife.

"Thank you, Mr. Browne, for being so frank with us," she said coolly. "If you don't mind, I *will* consult my solicitor." She bowed ever so slightly, indicating that the interview was at an end, and, moreover, that it had not been of her choosing.

"Any time, your ladyship," said Browne, also bowing. "I think Mrs. Browne wants to speak to you about the rooms."

"We are quite settled, Mr. Browne, and very well satisfied," she said pointedly, turning red with a fresh touch of anger.

"I trust you have not taken the rooms at this end."

"We have. We are occupying them." She arose and started away, Deppingham hesitating between his duty to her and the personal longing to pull Browne's nose.

"I'm sorry," said Browne. "We were warned not to take them. They are said to be unbearable when the hot winds come in October."

"What's that?" demanded Deppingham.

"The book of instruction and description which we have secured sets all that out," said the other. "Mr. Britt, my attorney, had his stenographer take it all down in Bombay. It's our private Baedeker, you see. We called on the Bombay agent for the Skaggs-Wyckholme Company. He lived with them in this house for ten months. No one ever slept in this end of the building. It's strange that the servants didn't warn you."

"The da—the confounded servants left us yesterday before we came—every mother's son of 'em. There isn't a servant on the place."

"What? You don't mean it?"

"Are you coming?" called Lady Deppingham from the doorway.

"At once, my dear," replied Deppingham, shuffling uneasily. "By Jove, we're in a pretty mess, don't you know. No servants, no food, no——"

"Wait a minute, please," interrupted Browne. "I say, Britt, come here a moment, will you? Lord Deppingham says the servants have struck."

The American lawyer, a chubby, red-faced man of forty, with clear grey eyes and a stubby mustache, whistled soulfully.

"What's the trouble? Cut their wages?" he asked.

"Wages? My good man, we've never laid eyes on 'em," said Deppingham, drawing himself up.

"I'll see what I can do, Mr. Browne. Got to have cooks, eh, Lord Deppingham?" Without waiting for an answer he dashed off. His lordship observing that his wife had disappeared, followed Browne to the balustrade,

overlooking the upper terrace. The native carriers were leaving the grounds, when Britt's shrill whistle brought them to a standstill. No word of the ensuing conversation reached the ears of the two white men on the balcony, but the pantomime was most entertaining.

Britt's stocky figure advanced to the very heart of the group. It was quite evident that his opening sentences were listened to impassively. Then, all at once, the natives began to gesticulate furiously and to shake their heads. Whereupon Britt pounded the palm of his left hand with an emphatic right fist, occasionally pointing over his shoulder with a stubborn thumb. At last, the argument dwindled down to a force of two—Britt and a tall, sallow Mohammedan. For two minutes they harangued each other and then the native gave up in despair. The lawyer waved a triumphant hand to his friends and then climbed into one of the litters, to be borne off in the direction of the town.

"He'll have the servants back at work before two o'clock," said Browne calmly. Deppingham was transfixed with astonishment.

"How—how the devil do you—does he bring 'em to time like that?" he murmured. He afterward said that if he had had Saunders there at that humiliating moment he would have kicked him.

"They're afraid of the American battleship," said Browne.

"But where is the American battleship?" demanded Deppingham, looking wildly to sea.

"They understand that there will be one here in a day or two if we need it," said Browne with a sly grin. "That's the bluff we've worked." He looked around for his wife, and, finding that she had gone inside, politely waved his hand to the Englishman and followed.

At three o'clock, Britt returned with the recalcitrant

servants—or at least the "pick" of them, as he termed the score he had chosen from the hundred or more. He seemed to have an Aladdin-like effect over the horde. It did not appear to depress him in the least that from among the personal effects of more than one peeped the ominous blade of a kris, or the clutch of a great revolver. He waved his hand and snapped his fingers and they herded into the servants' wing, from which in a twinkling they emerged ready to take up their old duties. They were not a liveried lot, but they were swift and capable.

Calmly taking Lord Deppingham and his following into his confidence, he said, in reply to their indignant remonstrances, later on in the day:

"I know that an American man-o'-war hasn't any right to fire upon British possessions, but you just keep quiet and let well enough alone. These fellows believe that the Americans can shoot straighter and with less pity than any other set of people on earth. If they ever find out the truth, we won't be able to control 'em a minute. It won't hurt you to let 'em believe that we can blow the island off the map in half a day, and they won't believe you if you tell 'em anything to the contrary. They just simply *know* that I can send wireless messages and that a cruiser would be out there to-morrow if necessary, pegging away at these green hills with cannon balls so big that there wouldn't be anything left but the horizon in an hour or two. You let me do the talking. I've got 'em bluffed and I'll keep 'em that way. Look at that! See those fellows getting ready to wash the front windows? They don't need it, I'll confess, but it makes conversation in the servants' hall."

Over in the gorgeous west wing, Lord Deppingham later on tried to convince his sulky little wife that the Americans were an amazing lot, after all. Bromley tapped at the door.

"Tea is served in the hanging garden, my lady," she announced. Her mistress looked up in surprise, red-eyed and a bit dishevelled.

"The—the what?"

"It's a very pretty place just outside the rooms of the American lady and gentleman, my lady. It's on the shady side and quite under the shelf of the mountain. There's a very cool breeze all the time, they say, from the caverns."

Deppingham glanced at the sun-baked window ledges of their own rooms and swore softly.

"Ask some one to bring the tea things in here, Bromley," she said sternly, her piquant face as hard and set as it could possibly be—which, as a matter of fact, was not noticeably adamantine. "Besides, I want to give some orders. We must have system here, not Americanisms."

"Very well, my lady."

After she had retired Deppingham was so unwise as to run his finger around the inside of his collar and utter the lamentation:

"By Jove, Aggie, it *is* hot in these rooms." She transfixed him with a stare.

"I find it delightfully cool, George." She called him George only when it was impossible to call him just what she wanted to.

The tea things did not come in; in their stead came pretty Mrs. Browne. She stood in the doorway, a pleading sincere smile on her face.

"Won't you *please* join Mr. Browne and me in that dear little garden? It's so cool up there and it must be dreadfully warm here. Really, you should move at once into Mr. Wyckholme's old apartments across the court from ours. They are splendid. But, now *do* come and have tea with us."

Whether it was the English love of tea or the American girl's method of making it, I do not know, but I am able to record the fact that Lord and Lady Deppingham hesitated ever so briefly and—fell.

"Extraordinary, Browne," said Deppingham, half an hour later. "What wonders you chaps can perform."

"Ho, ho!" laughed Browne. "We only strive to land on our feet, that's all. Another cigarette, Lady Deppingham?"

"Thank you. They are delicious. Where do you get them, Mr. Browne?"

"From the housekeeper. Your grandfather brought them over from London. My grandfather stored them away."

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAN FROM BRODNEY'S

It was quite forty-eight hours before the Deppinghams surrendered to the Brownes. They were obliged to humbly admit, in the seclusion of their own councils, that it was to the obnoxious but energetic Britt that they owed their present and ever-growing comfort.

It is said that Mr. Saunders learned more law of a useful and purposeful character during his first week of consultation with Britt than he could have dreamed that the statutes of England contained. Britt's brain was a whirlpool of suggestions, tricks, subterfuges and—yes, witticisms—that Saunders never even pretended to appreciate, although he was obliging enough to laugh at the right time quite as often as at the wrong. "He talks about what Dan Webster said, how Dan Voorhees could handle a jury, why Abe Lincoln and Andy Jackson were so—" Saunders would begin in a dazzled sort of way.

"Mr. Saunders, will you be good enough to ask Bromley to take Pong out for a walk?" her ladyship would interrupt languidly, and Saunders would descend to the requirements of his position.

Late in the afternoon of the day following the advent of the Brownes, Lord and Lady Deppingham were laboriously fanning themselves in the midst of their stifling Marie Antoinette elegance.

"By Jove, Aggie, it's too beastly hot here for words," growled he for the hundredth time. "I think we'd better move into your grandfather's rooms."

"Now, Deppy, don't let the Brownes talk you into everything they suggest," she complained, determined to be stubborn to the end. "They know entirely too much

about the place already; please don't let them know you as intimately."

"That's all very good, my dear, but you know quite as well as I that we made a frightful mistake in choosing these rooms. It *is* cooler on that side of the house. I'm not too proud to be comfortable, don't you know. Have you had a look at your grandfather's rooms?"

She was silent for a long time, pondering. "No, I haven't, Deppy, but I don't mind going over there now with you—just for a look. We can do it without letting them see us, you know."

Just as they were ready to depart stealthily for the distant wing, a servant came up to their rooms with a note from Mrs. Browne. It was an invitation to join the Americans at dinner that evening in the grand banquet hall. Across the bottom of Mrs. Browne's formal little note, her husband had jauntily scrawled: "*Just to see how small we'll feel in a ninety by seventy dining-room.*" Lady Deppingham flushed and her eyes glittered as she handed the note to her husband.

"Rubbish!" she exclaimed. Paying no heed to the wistful look in his eyes or to the appealing shuffle of his foot, she sent back a dignified little reply to the effect that "A previous engagement would prevent, etc." The polite lie made it necessary for them to venture forth at dinner time to eat their solitary meal of sardines and wafers in the grove below. The menu was limited to almost nothing because Deppy refused to fill his pockets with "tinned things and biscuit."

The next day they moved into the west wing, and that evening they had the Brownes to dine with them in the banquet hall. Deppingham awoke in the middle of the night with violent cramps in his stomach. He suffered in silence for a long time, but, the pain growing steadily worse, his stoicism gave way to alarm. A sudden thought

broke in upon him, and with a shout that was almost a shriek he called for Antoine. The valet found him groaning and in a cold perspiration.

"Don't say a word to Lady Deppingham," he grunted, sitting up in bed and gazing wildly at the ceiling, "but I've been poisoned. The demmed servants—ouch!—don't you know! Might have known. Silly ass! See what I mean? Get something for me—quick!"

For two hours Antoine applied hot water bags and soothing syrups, and his master, far from dying as he continually prophesied, dropped off into a peaceful sleep.

The next morning Deppingham, fully convinced that the native servants had tried to poison *him*, inquired of his wife if *she* had felt the alarming symptoms. She confessed to a violent headache, but laid it to the champagne. Later on, the rather haggard victim approached Browne with subtle inquiries. Browne also had a headache, but said he wasn't surprised. Fifteen minutes later, Deppingham, taking the bit in his quivering mouth, unconditionally discharged the entire force of native servants. He was still in a cold perspiration when he sent Saunders to tell his wife what he had done and what a narrow escape all of them had had from the treacherous Moslems.

Of course, there was a great upheaval. Lady Agnes came tearing down to the servants' hall, followed directly by the Brownes and Mr. Britt. The natives were ready to depart, considerably nonplussed, but not a little relieved.

"Stop!" she cried. "Deppy, what are you doing? Discharging them after we've had such a time getting them? Are you crazy?"

"They're a pack of snakes—I mean sneaks. They're assassins. They tried to poison every one of us last——"

"Nonsense! You ate too much. Besides, what's the

odds between being poisoned and being starved to death? Where is Mr. Britt?" She gave a sharp cry of relief as Britt came dashing down the corridor. "We must engage them all over again," she lamented, after explaining the situation. "Stand in the door, Deppy, and don't let them out until Mr. Britt has talked with them," she called to the disgraced nobleman.

"They won't stop for me," he muttered, looking at the half-dozen krises that were visible.

Britt smoothed the troubled waters with astonishing ease; the servants returned to their duties, but not without grumbling and no end of savage glances, all of which were levelled at the luckless Deppingham.

"By Jove, you'll see, sooner or later," he protested, like the schoolboy, almost ready to hope that the servants would bear him out by doling out ample quantities of strychnine that very night.

"Why poison?" demanded Britt. "They've got knives and guns, haven't they?"

"My dear man, that would put them to no end of trouble, cleaning up after us," said Deppingham, loftily.

The next day the horses were brought in from the valley, and the traps were put to immediate use. A half-dozen excursions were planned by the now friendly beneficiaries; life on the island, aside from certain legal restraints, began to take on the colour of a real holiday.

Two lawyers, each clever in his own way, were watching every move with the faithfulness of brooding hens. Both realised, of course, that the great fight would take place in England; they were simply active as outposts in the battle of wits. They posed amiably as common allies in the fight to keep the islanders from securing a single point of vantage during the year.

"If they hadn't been in such a hurry to get married," Britt would lament.

"Do you know, I don't believe a man should marry before he's thirty, a woman twenty-six," Saunders would observe in return.

"You're right, Saunders. I agree with you. I was married twice before I was thirty," reflected Britt on one occasion.

"Ah," sympathised Saunders. "You left a wife at home, then?"

"Two of 'em," said Britt, puffing dreamily. "But they are other men's wives now." Saunders was half an hour grasping the fact that Britt had been twice divorced.

Meanwhile, it may be well to depict the situation from the enemy's point of view—the enemy being the islanders as a unit. They were prepared to abide by the terms of the will so long as it remained clear to them that fair treatment came from the opposing interests. Rasula, the Aratat lawyer, in mass meeting, had discussed the document. They understood its requirements and its restrictions; they knew, by this time, that there was small chance of the original beneficiaries coming into the property under the provisions. Moreover, they knew that a bitter effort would be made to break this remarkable instrument in the English courts. Their attitude, in consequence, toward the grandchildren of their former lords was inimical, to say the least.

"We can afford to wait a year," Rasula had said in another mass meeting after the two months of suspense which preceded the discovery that grandchildren really existed. "There is the bare possibility that they may never marry each other," he added sententiously. Later came the news that marriage between the heirs was out of the question. Then the islanders laughed as they toiled. But they were not to be caught napping. Jacob von Blitz, the superintendent, stolid German that he was, saw far into the future. It was he who set the native

lawyer unceremoniously aside and urged competent representation in London. The great law firm headed by Sir John Brodney was chosen; a wide-awake representative of the distinguished solicitors was now on his way to the island with the swarthy committee which had created so much interest in the metropolis during its brief stay.

Jacob von Blitz came to the island when he was twenty years old. That was twenty years before the death of Taswell Skaggs. He had worked in the South African diamond fields and had no difficulty in securing employment with Skaggs and Wyckholme. Those were the days when the two Englishmen slaved night and day in the mines; they needed white men to stand beside them, for they looked ahead and saw what the growing discontent among the islanders was sure to mean in the end.

Von Blitz gradually lifted labour and responsibility from their shoulders; he became a valued man, not alone because of his ability as an overseer, but on account of the influence he had gained over the natives. It was he who acted as intermediary at the time of the revolt, many years before the opening of this tale. Through him the two issues were pooled; the present co-operative plan was the result. For this he was promptly accepted by both sides as deserving of a share corresponding to that of each native. From that day, he cast his lot with the islanders; it was to him that they turned in every hour of difficulty.

Von Blitz was shrewd enough to see that the grandchildren were not coming to the island for the mere pleasure of sojourning there; their motive was plain. It was he who advised—even commanded—the horde of servants to desert the château. If they had been able to follow his advice, the new residents would have been without "help" to the end of their stay. The end of their stay, he figured, would not be many weeks from its beginning if they

were compelled to dwell there without the luxury of servants. Bowles often related the story of Von Blitz's rage when he found that the recalcitrants had been persuaded to resume work by the American lawyer.

He lived, with his three wives, in the hills just above and south of the town itself. The Englishmen who worked in the bank, and the three Boer foremen also, had houses up there where it was cooler, but Von Blitz was the only one who practised polygamy. His wives were Persian women and handsome after the Persian fashion.

There were many Persian, Turkish and Arabian women on the island, wives of the more potential men. It was no secret that they had been purchased from avaricious masters on the mainland, in Bagdad and Damascus and the Persian gulf ports—sapphires passing in exchange. Marriages were performed by the local priests. There were no divorces. Perhaps there may have been a few more wife murders than necessary, but, if one assumes to call wife murder a crime, he must be reminded that the natives of Japat were fatalists. In contradiction to this belief, however, it is related that one night a wife took it upon herself to reverse the lever of destiny: she slew her husband. That, of course, was a phase of fatalism that was not to be tolerated. The populace burned her at a stake before morning.

One hot, dry afternoon about a week after the reopening of the château, the siesta of a swarthy population was disturbed by the shouts of those who kept impatient watch of the sea. Five minutes later the whole town of Aratat knew that the smoke of a steamer lay low on the horizon. No one doubted that it came from the stack of the boat that was bringing Rasula and the English solicitor. Joy turned to exultation when the word came down from Von Blitz that it was the long-looked-for steamship, the *Sir Joshua*.

Just before dusk the steamer, flying the British colours, hove to off the town of Aratat and signalled for the company's tug. There was no one in Aratat too old, too young or too ill to stay away from the pier and its vicinity. Bowles telephoned the news to the château, and the occupants, in no little excitement, had their tea served on the grand colonnade overlooking the town.

Von Blitz stood at the landing place to welcome Rasula and his comrades, and to be the first to clasp the hand of the man from London. For the first time in his life his stolidity gave way to something resembling exhilaration. He cast more than one meaning glance at the château, and those near by him heard him chuckle from time to time. The horde of natives seethed back and forth as the tug came running in; every eye was strained to catch the first glimpse of—Rasula? No! Of the man from Brodney's!

At last his figure could be made out on the forward deck. His straw hat was at least a head higher than the turban of Rasula, who was indicating to him the interesting spots in the hills.

"He's big," commented Von Blitz, comfortably, more to himself than to his neighbour. "And young," he added a few minutes later. Bowles, standing at his side, offered the single comment:

"Good-looking."

As the tall stranger stepped from the boat to the pier, Von Blitz suddenly started back, a look of wonder in his soggy eyes. Then, a thrill of satisfaction shot through his brain. He turned a look of triumph upon Britt, who had elbowed through the crowd a moment before and was standing close by.

The newcomer was an American!

CHAPTER IX

THE ENEMY

"I've sighted the Enemy," exclaimed Bobby Browne, coming up from Neptune's Pool—the largest of the fountains. His wife and Lady Deppingham were sitting in the cool retreat under the hanging garden. "Would you care to have a peek at him?"

"I should think so," said his wife, jumping to her feet. "He's been on the island three days, and we haven't had a glimpse of him. Come along, Lady Deppingham."

Lady Deppingham arose reluctantly, stifling a yawn.

"I'm so frightfully lazy, my dear," she sighed. "But," with a slight acceleration of speech, "anything in the shape of diversion is worth the effort, I'm sure. Where is he?"

They had come to call the new American lawyer "The Enemy." No one knew his name, or cared to know it, for that matter. Bowles, in answer to the telephone inquiries of Saunders, said that the new solicitor had taken temporary quarters above the bank and was in hourly consultation with Von Blitz, Rasula and others. Much of his time was spent at the mines. Later on, it was commonly reported, he was to take up his residence in Wyckholme's deserted bungalow, far up on the mountain side, in plain view from the château.

Life at the château had not been allowed to drag. The Deppinghams and the Brownes confessed in the privacy of their chambers that there was scant diplomacy in their "carryings-on," but without these indulgences the days and nights would have been intolerable.

The white servants had become good friends, despite the natural disdain that the trained English expert feels for the unpolished American domestic. Antipathies

were overlooked in the eager strife for companionship; the fact that one of Mrs. Browne's maids was of Irish extraction and the other a rosy Swede may have had something to do with their admission into the exclusive set below stairs, but that is outside the question. If the Suffolk maids felt any hesitancy about accepting the hybrid combination as their equals, it was never manifested by word or deed. Even the astute Antoine, who had lived long in the boulevards of Paris, and who therefore knew an American when he saw one at any distance or at any price, evinced no uncertainty in proclaiming them Americans.

Miss Pelham, the stenographer from West Twenty-third Street, might have been included in the circle from the first had not her dignity stood in the way. For six days she held resolutely aloof from everything except her notebook and her machine, but her stock of novels beginning to run low, and the prospect of being bored to extinction for six months to come looming up before her, she concluded to wave the olive branch in the face of social ostracism, assuming a genial attitude of condescension, which was graciously overlooked by the others. As she afterward said, there is no telling how low she might have sunk, had it not entered her head one day to set her cap for the unsuspecting Mr. Saunders. She had learned, in the wisdom of her sex, that he was fancy free. Mr. Saunders, fully warned against the American typewriter girl as a class, having read the most shocking jokes at her expense in the comic papers, was rather shy at the outset, but Britt gallantly came to Miss Pelham's defence and ultimate rescue by emphatically assuring Saunders that she was a perfect lady, guaranteed to cause uneasiness to no man's wife.

"But I have no wife," quickly protested Saunders, turning a dull red.

"The devil!" exclaimed Britt, apparently much upset by the revelation.

But of this more anon.

* * * * *

Browne conducted the two young women across the drawbridge and to the sunlit edge of the terrace, where two servants awaited them with parasols.

"Isn't it extraordinary, the trouble one is willing to take for the merest glimpse of a man?" sighed Lady Agnes. "At home we try to avoid them."

"Indeed?" said pretty Mrs. Browne, with a slight touch of irony. It was the first sign of the gentle warfare which their wits were to wage.

"There he is! See him?" almost whispered Browne, as if the solitary, motionless figure at the foot of the avenue was likely to hear his voice and be frightened away.

The Enemy was sitting serenely on one of the broad iron benches just inside the gates to the park, his arms stretched out along the back, his legs extended and crossed. The great stone wall behind him afforded shelter from the broiling sun; satinwood trees lent an appearance of coolness that did not exist, if one were to judge by the absence of hat and the fact that his soft shirt was open at the throat. He was not more than two hundred yards away from the clump of trees which screened his watchers from view. If he caught an occasional glimpse of dainty blue and white fabrics, he made no demonstration of interest or acknowledgment. It was quite apparent that he was lazily surveying the château, puffing with consistent ease at the cigarette which drooped from his lips. His long figure was attired in light grey flannels; one could not see the stripe at that distance, yet one could not help feeling that it existed—a slim black stripe, if any one should have asked.

"Quite at home," murmured her ladyship, which was enough to show that she excused the intruder on the ground that he was an American.

"Mr. Britt was right," said Mrs. Browne irrelevantly. She was peering at the stranger through the binoculars. "He is *very* good-looking."

"And you from Boston, too," scoffed Lady Deppingham. Mrs. Browne flushed, and smiled deprecatingly.

"Wonder what he's doing here in the grounds?" puzzled Browne.

"It's plain to me that he is resting his audacious bones," said her ladyship, glancing brightly at her co-legatee. The latter's wife, in a sudden huff, deliberately left them, crossing the macadam driveway in plain view of the stranger.

"She's not above an affair with him," was her hot, inward lament. She was mightily relieved, however, when the others tranquilly followed her across the road, and took up a new position under the substitute clump of trees.

The Enemy gave no sign of interest in these proceedings. If we was conscious of being watched by these curious exiles, he was not in the least annoyed. He did not change his position of indolence, nor did he puff any more fretfully at his cigarette. Instead, his eyes were bent lazily upon the white avenue, his thoughts apparently far away from the view ahead. He came out of his lassitude long enough to roll and light a fresh cigarette and to don his wide madras helmet.

Suddenly he looked to the right and then arose with some show of alacrity. Three men were approaching by the path which led down from the far-away stables. Browne recognised the dark-skinned men as servants in the château—the major-domo, the chef, and the master of the stables.

"Lord Deppingham must have sent them down to pitch him over the wall," he said, with an excited grin.

"Impossible! My husband is hunting for sapphires in the ravine back of—" She did not complete the sentence.

The Enemy was greeting the statuesque natives with a friendliness that upset all calculations. It was evident that the meeting was prearranged. There was no attempt at secrecy; the conference, whatever its portent, had the merit of being quite above-board. In the end, the tall solicitor, lifting his helmet with a gesture so significant that it left no room for speculation, turned and sauntered through the broad gateway and out into the forest road. The three servants returned as they had come, by way of the bridle path along the wall.

"The nerve of him!" exclaimed Browne. "That graceful attention was meant for us."

"He is like the polite robber who first beats you to death and then says thank you for the purse," said Lady Deppingham. "What a strange proceeding, Mr. Browne. Can you imagine what it means?"

"Mischief of some sort, I'll be bound. I admire his nerve in holding the confab under our very noses. I'll have Britt interview those fellows at once. Our kitchen, our stable and our domestic discipline are threatened."

They hastened to the château, and regaled the resourceful Britt with the disquieting news.

"I'll have it out of 'em in a minute," he said confidently. "Where's Saunders? Where's Miss Pelham? Confound the girl, she's never around when I want her these days. Hay, you!" to a servant. "Send Miss Pelham to me. The one in pink, understand? Golden-haired one. Yes, yes, that's right: the one who jiggles her fingers. Tell her to hurry."

But Miss Pelham was off in the wood, self-charged with the arousing of Mr. Saunders; an hour passed before she

could be found and brought into the light of Mr. Britt's reflections. If her pert nose was capable of elevating itself in silent disdain, Mr. Saunders was not able to emulate its example. He was not so dazzled by the sunshine of her sprightly recitals but that he could look sheep-faced in the afterglow of Britt's scorn.

Britt, with all his clever blustering, could elicit no information from the crafty head-servants. All they would say was that the strange sahib had intercepted them on their way to the town, to ask if there were any rooms to rent in the château.

"That's what he told you to say, isn't it?" demanded Britt angrily. "Confounded his impudence! Rooms to rent!"

That evening he dragged the reluctant Saunders into the privacy of the hanging garden, and deliberately interrupted the game of bridge which was going on. If Deppingham had any intention to resent the intrusion of the solicitors, he was forestalled by the startling annoucement of Mr. Britt, who seldom stood on ceremony where duty was concerned.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Britt, calmly dropping into a chair near by, "this place is full of spies."

"Spies!" cried four voices in unison. Mr. Saunders nodded a plaintive apology.

"Yes, sir, every native servant here is a spy. That's what the Enemy was here for to-day. I've analysed the situation and I'm right. Ain't I, Mr. Saunders? Of course, I am. He came here to tell 'em what to do and how to report our affairs to him. See? Well, there you are. We've simply got to be careful what we do and say in their presence. Leave 'em to me. Just be careful, that's all."

"I don't intend to be watched by a band of sneaks—" began Lord Deppingham loftily.

"You can't help yourself," interrupted Britt.

"I'll discharge every demmed one of them, that's——"

"Leave 'em to me—leave 'em to me," exclaimed Britt impatiently. His lordship stiffened but could find no words for instant use. "Now let me tell you something. This lawyer of theirs is a smooth party. He's here to look out for their interests and they know it. It's not to their interest to assassinate you or to do any open dirty work. He is too clever for that. I've found out from Mr. Bowles just what the fellow has done since he landed, three days ago. He has gone over all of the company's accounts, in the office and at the mines, to see that we, as agents for the executors, haven't put up any job to mulct the natives out of their share of the profits. He has organised the whole population into a sort of constabulary to protect itself against any shrewd move we may contemplate. Moreover, he's getting the evidence of everybody to prove that Skaggs and Wyckholme were men of sound mind up to the hour of their death. He has the depositions of agents and dealers in Bombay, Aden, Suez and three or four European cities, all along that line. He goes over the day's business at the bank as often as we do as agents for the executors. He knows just how many rubies and sapphires were washed out yesterday, and how much they weigh. It's our business, as your agents, to scrape up everything as far back as we can go to prove that the old chaps were mentally off their base when they drew up that agreement and will. I think we've got a shade the best of it, even though the will looks good. The impulse that prompted it was a crazy one in the first place." He hesitated a moment and then went on carefully. "Of course, if we can prove that insanity has always run through the two families it——"

"Good Lord!" gasped Browne nervously.

"—it would be a great help. If we can show that you

and Mrs.—er—Lady Deppingham have queer spells occasionally, it——"

"Not for all the islands in the world," cried Lady Deppingham. "The idea! Queer spells! See here, Mr. Britt, if I have any queer spells to speak of, I won't have them treated publicly. If Lord Deppingham can afford to overlook them, I daresay I can, also, even though it costs me the inheritance to do so. Please be good enough to leave me out of the insanity dodge, as you Americans call it."

"Madam, God alone provides that part of your inheritance—" began Britt insistently, fearing that he was losing fair ground.

"Then leave it for God to discover. I'll not be a party to it. It's utter nonsense," she cried scathingly.

"Rubbish!" asserted Mr. Saunders boldly.

"What?" exclaimed Britt, turning upon Saunders so abruptly that the little man jumped, and immediately began to readjust his necktie. "What's that? Look here; it's our only hope—the insanity dodge, I mean. They've got to show in an English court that Skaggs and——"

"Let them show what they please about Skaggs," interrupted Bobby Browne, "but, confound you, I can't have any one saying that I'm subject to fits or spells or whatever you choose to call 'em. I don't have 'em, but even if I did, I'd have 'em privately, not for the benefit of the public."

"Is it necessary to make my husband insane in order to establish the fact that his grandfather was not of sound mind?" queried pretty Mrs. Browne, with her calmest Boston inflection.

"It depends on your husband," said Britt coolly. "If he sticks at anything which may help us to break that will, he's certainly insane. That's all I've got to say about it."

"Well, I'm hanged if I'll pose as an insane man," roared Browne.

"Mr. Saunders hasn't asked *me* to be insane, have you, Mr. Saunders?" asked Lady Agnes in her sweetest scorn.

"I don't apprehend—" began Saunders nervously.

"Saunders," said Britt, calculatingly and evenly, "next thing we'll have to begin hunting for insanity in your family. We haven't heard anything from you on this little point, Lord Deppingham."

"I don't know anything about Mr. Saunders's family," said Deppingham stiffly. Britt looked at him for a moment, puzzled and uncertain. Then he gave a short, hopeless laugh and said, under his breath:

"Holy smoke!"

He immediately altered the course of the discussion and harked back to his original declaration that spies abounded in the château. When he finally called the conference adjourned and prepared to depart, he calmly turned to the stenographer.

"Did you get all this down, Miss Pelham?"

"Yes, Mr. Britt."

"Good!" Then he went away, leaving the quartette unconsciously depressed by the emphasis he placed upon that single word.

The next day but one, it was announced that the Enemy had moved into the bungalow. Signs of activity about the rambling place could be made out from the hanging garden at the château. It was necessary, however, to employ the binoculars in the rather close watch that was kept by the interested aristocrats below. From time to time the grey, blue or white-clad figure of the Enemy could be seen directing the operations of the natives who were engaged in rehabilitating Wyckholme's "nest."

The château was now under the very eye of the Enemy.

CHAPTER X

THE AMERICAN BAR

"You're wanted at the 'phone, Mr. Britt," said Miss Pelham. It was late in the evening a day or two afterward. Britt went into the booth. He was not in there long, but when he came out he found that Miss Pelham had disappeared. The coincidence was significant; Mr. Saunders was also missing from his seat on the window-sill at the far end of the long corridor. Britt looked his disgust, and muttered something characteristic. Having no one near with whom he could communicate, he boldly set off for the hanging garden, where Deppingham had installed the long-idle roulette paraphernalia. The quartette were placing prospective rubies and sapphires on the board, using gun-wads in lieu of the real article.

Britt's stocky figure came down through the maze of halls, across the vine-covered bridge and into the midst of a transaction which involved perhaps a hundred thousand pounds in rubies.

"Say," he said, without ceremony, "the Enemy's in trouble. Bowles just telephoned. There's a lot of excitement in the town. I don't know what to make of it."

"Then why the devil are you breaking in here with it?" growled Deppingham, who was growing to hate Britt with an ardour that was unmanageable.

"This'll interest you, never fear. There's been a row between Von Blitz and the lawyer, and the lawyer has unmercifully threshed Von Blitz. Good Lord, I'd like to have seen it, wouldn't you, Browne? Say, he's all right, isn't he?"

"What was it all about?" demanded Browne. They were now listening, all attention.

"It seems that Von Blitz is in the habit of licking his wives," said Britt. "Bowles was so excited he could hardly talk. It must have been awful if it could get Bowles really awake."

"Miraculous!" said Deppingham conclusively.

"Well, as I get it, the lawyer has concluded to advance the American idiosyncrasy known as reform. It's a habit with us, my lady. We'll try to reform heaven if enough of us get there to form a club. Von Blitz beats his Persian wives instead of his Persian rugs, therefore he needed reforming. Our friend, the Enemy, met him this evening, and told him that no white man could beat his wife, singular or plural, while he was around. Von Blitz is a big, ugly chap, and he naturally resented the interference with his divine might. He told the lawyer to go hang or something equivalent. The lawyer knocked him down. By George, I'd like to have seen it! From the way Bowles tells it, he must have knocked him down so incessantly in the next five minutes that Von Blitz's attempts to stand up were nothing short of a stutter. Moreover, he wouldn't let Von Blitz stab him worth a cent. Bowles says he's got Von Blitz cowed, and the whole town is walking in circles, it's so dizzy. Von Blitz's wives threaten to kill the lawyer, but I guess they won't. Bowles says that all the Persian and Turkish women on the island are crazy about the fellow."

"Mr. Britt!" protested Mrs. Browne.

"Beg pardon. Perhaps Bowles is wrong. Well, to make it short, the lawyer has got Von Blitz to hating him secretly, and the German has a lot of influence over the people. It may be uncomfortable for our good-looking friend. If he didn't seem so well able to look out for himself, I'd feel mighty uneasy about him. After all, he's a white man and a good fellow, I imagine."

"If he should be in great danger down there," said her

ladyship firmly—perhaps consciously—"we must offer him a safe retreat in the château." The others looked at her in surprise. "We can't stand off and see him murdered, you know," she qualified hastily.

The next morning a messenger came up from the town with a letter directed to Messrs. Britt and Saunders. It was from the Enemy, and requested them to meet him in private conference at four that afternoon. "I think it will be for the benefit of all concerned if we can get together," wrote the Enemy in conclusion.

"He's weakening," mused Britt, experiencing a sense of disappointment over his countryman's fallibility. "My word for it, Saunders, he's going to propose an armistice of some sort. He can't keep up the bluff."

"Shocking bad form, writing to us like this," said Saunders reflectively. "As if we'd go into any agreement with the fellow. I'm sure Lady Deppingham wouldn't consider it for a moment."

The messenger carried back with him a dignified response in which the counsellors for Mr. Browne and Lady Deppingham respectfully declined to engage in any conference at this time.

At two o'clock that afternoon the entire force of native servants picked up their belongings, and marched out of the château. Britt stormed and threatened, but the inscrutable Mohammedans shook their heads and hastened toward the gates. Despair reigned in the château; tears and lamentations were no more effective than blasphemy. The major-domo, suave and deferential, gravely informed Mr. Britt that they were leaving at the instigation of their legal adviser, who had but that hour issued his instructions.

"I hope you are not forgetting what I said about the American gunboats," said Britt ponderously.

"Ah," said Baillo, with a cunning smile, "our man is

also a great American. He can command the gunboats, too, sahib. We have told him that you have the great power. He shows us that he can call upon the English ships as well, for he comes last from London. He can have both, while you have only one. Besides, he says you cannot send a message in the air, without the wire, unless he give permission. He have a little machine that catch all the lightning in the air and hold it till he reads the message. Our man is a great man—next to Mohammed."

Britt passed his hand over his brow, staggered by these statements. Gnawing at his stubby mustache, he was compelled to stand by helplessly, while they crowded through the gates like a pack of hounds at the call of the master. The deserters were gone; the deserted stood staring after them with wonder in their eyes. Suddenly Britt laughed and clapped Deppingham on the back.

"Say, he's smoother than I thought. Most men would have been damned fools enough to say that it was all poppy-cock about me sending wireless messages and calling out navies; but not he! And that machine for tapping the air! Say, we'd better go slow with that fellow. If you say so, I'll call him up and tell him we'll agree to his little old conference. What say to that, Browne? And you, Deppy? Think we——"

"See here," roared Deppingham, red as a lobster, "I won't have you calling me Deppy, confound your——"

"I'll take it all back, my lord. Slip of the tongue. Please overlook it. But, say, shall I call him up on the 'phone and head off the strike?"

"Anything, Mr. Britt, to get back our servants," said Lady Deppingham, who had come up with Mrs. Browne.

"I was just beginning to learn their names and to understand their English," lamented Mrs. Browne.

When Britt reappeared after a brief stay in the tele-

phone booth he was perspiring freely, and his face was redder, if possible, than ever before.

"What did he say?" demanded Mrs. Browne, consumed by curiosity. Britt fanned himself for a moment before answering.

"He was very peremptory at first and very agreeable in the end, Mrs. Browne. I said we'd come down at four-thirty. He asked me to bring some cigarettes. Say, he's a strenuous chap. He wouldn't haggle for a second."

Britt and Saunders found the Enemy waiting for them under the awning in front of the bank. He was sitting in a long canvas lounging chair, his feet stretched out, his hands clasped behind his head. There was a far-away, discontented look in his eyes. A native was fanning him industriously from behind. There was no uncertainty in their judgment of him; he looked a man from the top of his head to the tips of his canvas shoes.

Every line of his long body indicated power, vitality, health. His lean, masterful face, with its clear grey eyes (the suspicion of a sardonic smile in their depths), struck them at once as that of a man who could and would do things in the very teeth of the dogs of war.

He arose quickly as they came under the awning. A frank, even joyous, smile now lighted his face, a smile that meant more than either of them could have suspected. It was the smile of one who had almost forgotten what it meant to have the companionship of his fellowman. Both men were surprised by the eager, sincere manner in which he greeted them. He clasped their hands in a grip that belied his terse, uncompromising manner at the telephone; his eyes were not those of the domineering individual whom conjecture had appraised so vividly a short time before.

"Glad to see you, gentlemen," he said. He was a head

taller than either, coatless and hatless, a lean but brawny figure in white crash trousers. His shirt sleeves were rolled up to the elbows, displaying hard, sinewy forearms, browned by the sun and wind. "It's very good of you to come down. I'm sure we won't have to call out the British or American gunboats to preserve order in our midst. I know something a great deal better than gunboats. If you'll come to my shack down the street, I'll mix you a real American cocktail, a mint julep, a brandy smash or anything you like in season. There's a fine mint bed up my way, just back of the bungalow. It's more precious than a ruby mine, let me tell you. And yet, I'll exchange three hundred carats of mint, Mr. Britt, for a dozen boxes of your Egyptian deities."

Then as they sauntered off into a narrow side street: "Do you know, gentlemen, I made the greatest mistake of my life in failing to bring a ton of these little white sticks out with me? I thought of Gordon gin, both kinds of vermouth, brandy, and all that sort of thing, and completely forgot the staff of life. I happened to know that you have a million packages of them, more or less, up at the château. My spies told me. I daresay you know that I have spies up there all the time? Don't pay any attention to them. You're at liberty to set spies on my trail at any time. Here we are. This is the headquarters for the Mine-owners' Association of Japat."

He led them down a flight of steps and into a long, cool-looking room some distance below the level of the street. Narrow windows near the ceiling let in the light of day and yet kept out much of the oppressive heat. A huge ice chest stood at one end of the room. At the other end was his desk; a couch, two chairs, and a small deal table were the only other articles of furniture. The floor was covered with rugs; the walls were hung with ancient weapons of offence and defence.

"The Mine-owners' Association, gentlemen, comprises the entire population of Japat. Here is where I receive my clients; here is where they receive their daily loaf, if you will pardon the simile. I sit in the chairs; they squat on the rugs. We talk about rubies and sapphires as if they were peanuts. Occasionally we talk about our neighbours. Shall I make three mint juleps? Here, Selim! The ice, the mint and the straws—and the bottles. Sit down, gentlemen. This is the American bar that Baedeker tells you about—the one you've searched all over Europe for, I daresay."

"Reminds me of home, just a little bit," said Britt, as the tall glasses were set before them. The Englishman was still clothed in reticence. His slim, pinched body seemed more drawn up than ever before; the part in his thatch of straw-coloured hair was as straight and undeviating as if it had been laid by rule; his eyes were set and uncompromising. Mr. Saunders was determined that the two Americans should not draw him into a trap; after what he had seen of their methods, and their amazing similarity of operation, he was quite prepared to suspect collusion. "They shan't catch me napping," was the sober reflection of Thomas Saunders.

The Enemy planted the mint in its bed of chipped ice. "The sagacity that Taswell Skaggs displayed in erecting an ice plant and cold storage house here is equalled only by John Wyckholme's foresightedness in maintaining a contemporaneous mint bed. I imagine that you, gentlemen, are hoping to prove the old codgers insane. Between the three of us, and man to man, how can you have the heart to propose anything so unkind when we look, as we now do, upon the result of their extreme soundness of mind? Here's how?"

Selim passed the straws and the three men took a long and simultaneous "pull" at the refreshing julep. Mr.

Saunders felt something melt as he drew the subsequent long and satisfying breath. It was the outer rim of his cautious reserve.

"I think we'll take you up on that proposition to trade mint for cigarettes," said Mr. Britt. "Mr. Browne, my client, for one, will sanction the deal. How about your client, Saunders?"

Saunders raised his eyes, but did not at once reply, for the very significant reason that he had just begun a second "pull" at his straw.

"I can't say as to Lady Deppingham," he responded, after touching his lips three or four times with his handkerchief, "but I'm quite sure his lordship will make no objection."

"Then we'll consider the deal closed. I'll send one of my boys over to-morrow with a bunch of mint. Telephone up to the bungalow when you need more. By the way," dropping into a curiously reflective air, "may I ask why Lady Deppingham is permitted to ride alone through the unfrequented and perilous parts of the island?" The question was directed to her solicitor, who stared hard for a moment before replying.

"Perilous? What do you mean?"

"Just this, Mr. Saunders," said the Enemy, leaning forward earnestly. "I'm not responsible for the acts of these islanders. You'll admit that there is some justification in their contention that the island and its treasures may be snatched away from them, by some hook or crook. Well, there are men among them who would not hesitate to dispose of one or both of the heirs if they could do it without danger to their interests. What could be more simple, Mr. Saunders, than the death of Lady Deppingham if her horse should stumble and precipitate her to the bottom of one of those deep ravines? She wouldn't be alive to tell how it really happened and there would

be no other witnesses. She's much too young and beautiful to come to that sort of an end."

"My word!" was all that Saunders could say, forgetting his julep in contemplation of the catastrophe.

"He's right," said Britt promptly. "I'll keep my own client on the straight and public path. He's liable to tip over, too."

"Deuce take your Browne," said Saunders with mild asperity. "He never rides alone."

"I've noticed that," said the Enemy coolly. "He's usually with Lady Deppingham. It's lucky that Japat is free from gossips, gentlemen."

"Oh, I say," said Saunders, "none of that talk, you know."

"Don't lose your temper, Saunders," remonstrated Britt. "Browne's worth two of Deppingham."

"Gentlemen," said the Enemy, "please remember that we are not to discuss the habits of our clients. To change the subject, Britt, that was a— Oh, Selim, please step over to the bank and ask what time it is." As Selim departed, the Enemy remarked: "It won't do for him to hear too much. As I was saying, that was a clever bluff of yours—I mean the gunboat goblin. I have enlarged upon your story somewhat. You——"

"Yes," said Britt, "you've added quite a bit to it."

"It's a sort of two-story affair now, don't you know," said Saunders, feeling the effect of the drink. They all laughed heartily, two, at least, in some surprise. Saunders never let an opportunity escape to repeat the joke to his friends in after life; in fact, he made the opportunity more often than not.

"There's another thing I want to speak of," said the Enemy, arising to prepare the second round of juleps. "I hope you won't take my suggestions amiss. They're intended for the peace and security of the island, nothing

else. Of course, I could sit back and say nothing, thereby letting your clients cut off their own noses, but it's hardly fair among white people. Besides, it can have nothing to do with the legal side of the situation. Well, here it is: I hear that your clients and their partners for life are in the habit of gambling like fury up there."

"Gambling?" said Britt. "What rot!"

"The servants say that they play Bridge every night for vast piles of rubies, and turn the wheel daily for sapphires uncountable. Oh, I get it straight."

"Why, man, it's all a joke. They use gun wads and simply play that they are rubies."

"My word," said Saunders, "there isn't a ruby or sapphire in the party."

"That's all right," said the Enemy, standing before them with a bunch of mint in one hand and the bowl of ice in the other. They could not but see that his face was serious. "We know it's all right, but the servants don't. How do they know that the stakes are not what they're said to be? It may be a joke, but the people think you are playing for real stones, using gun wads as they've seen poker chips used. I've heard that as much as £50,000 in precious gems change hands in a night. Well, the situation is obvious. Every man in Japat thinks that your people are gambling with jewels that belong to the corporation. They think there's something crooked, d'ye see? My advice to you is: Stop that sort of joking. It's not a joke to the islanders, as you may find out to your sorrow. Take the tip from me, gentlemen. Let 'em play for pins or peppermint drops, but not for rubies red. Here's your julep, Mr. Saunders. Fresh straw?"

"By Jove," said Saunders, taking a straw, and at the same time staring in open-mouthed wonder at the tall

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host; "you appal me! It's most extraordinary. But I see your point clearly, quite clearly. Do you, Britt?"

"Certainly," said Britt with a look of disdain. "I told 'em to lower the limit long ago."

"This is all offered in a kindly spirit, you understand," said the magnanimous Enemy. "We might as well live comfortably as to die unseasonably here. Another little suggestion, Mr. Saunders. Please tell Lord Deppingham that if he persists in snooping about the ravines in search of rubies, he'll get an unmanageable bullet in the back of his head some day soon. He's being watched all the time. The natives resent his actions, foolish as they may seem to us. This is not child's play. He has no right to a single ruby, even if he should see one and know what it was. Just tell him that, please, Mr. Saunders."

"I shall, confound him," exploded Saunders, smiting the table mightily. "He's too damned uppish anyhow. He needs taking down——"

"Ah, Selim," interrupted the Enemy, as the native boy entered, "no mail, eh?"

"No, excellency, the ship is not due to arrive for two weeks."

"Ah, but, Selim, you forget that I am expecting a letter from Von Blitz's wives. They promised to let me know how soon he is able to resume work at the mines."

"I hear you polished him off neatly," said Britt, with a grin.

"Just the rough edges, Mr. Britt. He is now a gem of purest ray serene. By the way, I hope you'll not take my mild suggestions amiss."

"There's nothing I object to except your power to call strikes among our servants. That seems to me to be rather high-handed," said Britt good-naturedly.

"No doubt you're right," agreed the other, "but you must remember that I needed the cigarettes."

"My word!" muttered Saunders admiringly.

"Look here, old man," said Britt, his cheeks glowing, "it's mighty good of you to take this trouble for——"

"Don't mention it. I'd only ask in return that we three be a little more sociable hereafter. We're not here to cut each other's throats, you know, and we've got a deadly half year ahead of us. What say?"

For answer the two lawyers arose and shook hands with the excellent Enemy. When they started for the château at seven o'clock, each with six mint juleps about his person, they were too mellow for analysis. The Enemy, who had drunk but little, took an arm of each and piloted them sturdily through the town.

"I'd walk up to the château if I were you," he said, when they clamoured for a jinriksha apiece. "It will help pass away the time."

"By Jove," said Saunders, hunting for the Enemy's hand. "I'm going to 'nform L-Lord Deppingham that he's 'nsufferable ass an'—an' I don't care who knows it."

"Saunders," said Britt, with rare dignity, "take your hand out of my pocket."

CHAPTER XI

THE SLOUGH OF TRANQUILLITY

THREE months stole by with tantalising slowness. How the strangers on the island of Japat employed those dull, simmering, idle weeks it would not be difficult to relate. There was little or no incident to break the monotony of their enforced residence among the surly Japatites; the same routine obtained from day to day. Sultry, changeless, machine-like were those hundred days and nights. They looked forward with hopeful, tired eyes; never backward. There was nothing behind them but a dour waste, a bog through which they had driven themselves with a lash of resolution.

Autumn passed on into winter without a change of expression in the benign face of nature. Christmas day was as hot as if it had come in midsummer; the natives were as naked, the trees as fully clad. The curious sun closed his great eye for a few hours in the twenty-four; the remainder of the time he glared down upon his victims with a malevolence that knew no bounds. Soft, sweet winds came with the typhoon season, else the poor whites must have shrivelled and died while nature revelled. Rain fell often in fitful little bursts of joyousness, but the hungry earth sipped its moisture through a million greedy lips, eager to thwart the mischievous sun. Through it all, the château gleamed red and purple and gray against the green mountainside, baked where the sun could meet its face, cool where the caverns blew upon it with their rich, damp breath.

The six months were passing away, however, in spite of themselves; ten weeks were left before the worn, but determined heirs could cast off their bonds and rush away

to other climes. It mattered little whether they went away rich or poor; they were to go! Go! That was the richest thing the future held out to them—more precious than the wealth for which they stayed. Whatever was being done for them in London and Boston, it was no recompense for the weariness of heart and soul that they had found in the green island of Japat.

True, they rode and played and swam and romped without restraint, but beneath all of their abandon there lurked the ever-present pathos of the jail, the asylum, the detention ward. The blue sky seemed streaked with the bars of their prison; the green earth clanked as with the sombre tread of feet crossing flagstones.

Not until the end of January was there a sign of revolt against the ever-growing, insidious condition of melancholy. As they turned into the last third of their exile, they found heart to rejoice in the thought that release was coming nearer and nearer. The end of March! Eight weeks off! Soon there would be but seven weeks—then six!

And, all this time, the islanders toiled as they had toiled for years; they reckoned in years, while the strangers cast up Time's account in weeks and called them years. Each day the brown men worked in the mines, piling gems into the vaults with a resoluteness that never faltered. They were the sons of Martha. The rubies of Mandalay and Mogok were rivalled by the takings of these indifferent stockholders in the great Japat corporation. Nothing short of a ruby as large as the Tibet gem could have startled them out of their state of taciturnity. Gems weighing ten and fifteen carats already had been taken from the "byon" in the wash, and yet inspired no exaltation. Sapphires, nestling in the soft ground near their carmine sisters, were rolling into the coffers of the com-

pany, but they were treated as so many pebbles in this ceaseless search.

The tiniest child knew that the ruby would not lose its colour by fire, while the blue of the sapphire would vanish forever if subjected to heat. All these things and many more the white strangers learned; they were surfeited with a knowledge that tired and bored them.

From London came disquieting news for all sides to the controversy. The struggle promised to be drawn out for years, perhaps; the executors would probably be compelled to turn over the affairs of the corporation to agents of the Crown; in the meantime a battle royal, long drawn out, would undoubtedly be fought for the vast unentailed estate left behind by the two legators.

The lonely legatees, marooned in the far South Sea, began to realise that even after they had spent their six months of probation, they would still have months, even years, of waiting before they could touch the fortune they laid claim to. The islanders also were vaguely awake to the fact that everything might be tied up for years, despite the provisions of the will; a restless, stubborn feeling of alarm spread among them. This feeling gradually developed itself into bitter resentment; hatred for the people who were causing this delay was growing deeper and fiercer with each succeeding day of toil.

Their counsellor, the complacent Enemy, was in no sense immune to the blandishments of the climate. His tremendous vitality waned; he slowly drifted into the current with his fellows, although not beside them. For some unaccountable reason, he held himself aloof from the men and women that his charges were fighting. He met the two lawyers often, but nothing passed between them that could have been regarded as the slightest breach of trust. He lived like a rajah in his shady bungalow, surrounded by the luxuries of one to whom all things are brought

indivisible. If he had any longing for the society of women of his own race and kind, he carefully concealed it; his indifference to the subtle though unmistakable appeals of the two gentlewomen in the château was irritating in the extreme. When he deliberately, though politely, declined their invitation to tea one afternoon, their humiliation knew no bounds. They had, after weeks of procrastination, surrendered to the inevitable. It was when they could no longer stand out against the common enemy—Tranquillity! Lord Deppingham and Bobby Browne suffered in silence; they even looked longingly toward the bungalow for the relief that it contained and refused to extend.

Lady Deppingham and Mrs. Browne should not be misunderstood by the reader. They loved their husbands—I am quite sure of that; but they were tired of seeing no one else, tired of talking to no one else. Moreover, in support of this one-sided assertion, they experienced from time to time the most melancholy attacks of jealousy. The drag of time hung so heavily upon them that any struggle to cast it off was immediately noticeable. If Mrs. Browne, in plain despair, went off for a day's ride with Lord Deppingham, that gentleman's wife was sick with jealousy. If Lady Agnes strolled in the moonlit gardens with Mr. Browne, the former Miss Bate of Boston could scarcely control her emotions. They shed many tears of anguish over the faithlessness of husbands; tears of hatred over the viciousness of temptresses. Their quarrels were fierce, their upbraidings characteristic, but in the end they cried and kissed and "made up"; they actually found some joy in creating these little feuds and certainly there was great exhilaration in ending them.

They did not know, of course, that the wily Britt, despite his own depression, was all the while accumulat-

ing the most astounding lot of evidence to show that a decided streak of insanity existed in the two heirs. He won Saunders over to his way of thinking, and that faithful agent unconsciously found himself constantly on the watch for "signs," jotting them down in his memorandum book. Britt was firm in his purpose to make them out as "mad as March hares" if needs be; he slyly patted his typewritten "manifestations" and said that it would be easy sailing, so far as he was concerned. One choice bit of evidence he secured in a most canny manner. He was present when Miss Pelham, at the bank, was "taking" a dictation for the Enemy—some matter pertaining to the output of the mines. Lady Deppingham had just been guilty of a most astounding piece of foolhardiness, and he was discussing it with the Enemy. She had forced her horse to leap across a narrow fissure in the volcano the day before. Falling, she would have gone to her death three hundred feet below.

"She must be an out and out lunatic," the Enemy had said. Britt looked quickly at Miss Pelham and Mr. Bowles. The former took down the statement in shorthand and Bowles was afterward required to sign "his deposition." Such a statement as that, coming from the source it did, would be of inestimable value in Court.

"If they could only be married in some way," was Britt's private lament to Saunders, from time to time, when despair overcame confidence.

"I've got a ripping idea," Saunders said one day.

"Let's have it. You've always got 'em. Why not divide with me?"

"Can't do it just yet. I've been looking up a little matter. I'll spring it soon."

"How long have you been working on the idea?"

"Nearly four months," said Saunders, yawning.

"'Gad, this climate *is* enervating," was Britt's caustic comment.

Saunders was heels over head in love with Miss Pelham at this time, so it is not surprising that he had some sort of an idea about marriage, no matter whom it concerned.

Night after night, the Deppinghams and Brownes gave dinners, balls, musicales, "Bridges," masques and theatre suppers at the château. First one would invite the other to a great ball, then the other would respond by giving a sumptuous dinner. Their dinners were served with as much punctiliousness as if the lordliest guests were present; their dancing parties, while somewhat barren of guests, were never dull for longer than ten minutes after they opened. Each lady danced twice and then pleaded a headache. Whereupon the "function" came to a close.

For a while, the two hostesses were not in a position to ask any one outside their immediate families to these functions, but one day Mrs. Browne was seized by an inspiration. She announced that she was going to send regular invitations to all of her friends at home.

"Regular written invitations, with five-cent stamps, my dear," she explained enthusiastically. "Just like this: 'Mrs. Robert Browne requests the pleasure of Miss So-and-so's company at dinner on the 17th of Whatever-it-is. Please reply by return steamer.' Won't it be fun? Bobby, please send down to the bank for the stamps. I'm going to make out a list."

After that it was no unusual thing to see large packages of carefully stamped envelopes going to sea in the ships that came for the mail.

"And I'd like so much to meet these native Americans that you are asking," said Lady Agnes sweetly, and without malice. "I've always wondered if the first families over there show any trace of their wonderful, picturesque Indian blood."

"Our first families came from England, Lady Deppingham," said Drusilla, biting her lips.

"Indeed? From what part of England?" Of course, that query killed every chance for a sensible discussion.

One morning during the first week in February, the steamer from Aden brought stacks of mail—the customary newspapers, magazines, novels, telegrams and letters. It was noticed that her ladyship had several hundred letters, many bearing crests or coats-of-arms.

At last, she came to a letter of many pages, covered with a scrawl that looked preposterously fashionable.

"Nouveau riche," thought Drusilla Browne, looking up from her own letters. Lady Agnes gave a sudden shriek, and, leaping to her feet, performed a dance that set her husband and Bobby Browne to gasping.

"She's coming!" she cried ecstatically, repeating herself a dozen times.

"Who's coming, Aggie?" roared her husband for the sixth time.

"She!"

"She may be a steamship for all I know, if——"

"The Princess! Deppy, I'm going to squeeze you! I must squeeze somebody! Isn't it glorious? Now—now! Now life will be worth living in this beastly place."

Her dearest friend, the Princess, had written to say that she was coming to spend a month with her. Her dear schoolmate of the old days in Paris—her chum of the dear Sacred Heart Convent when it flourished in the Boulevard des Invalides—her roommate up to the day when that institution was forced to leave Paris for less unfriendly fields!

"In her uncle's yacht, Deppy—the big one that came to Cowes last year, don't you know? Of course, you do. Don't look so dazed. He's cruising for a couple of months and is to set her down here until the yacht returns

from Borneo and the Philippines. She says she hopes it will be quiet here! Quiet! She *hopes* it will be *quiet!* Where are the cigarettes, Deppy? Quick! I must do something devilish. Yes, I know I swore off last week, but—please let me take 'em." The four of them smoked in wondrous silence for two or three minutes. Then Browne spoke up, as if coming from a dream:

"I say, Deppingham, you can take her out walking and pick up a crownful of fresh rubies every day or so."

"Hang it all, Browne, I'm afraid to pluck a violet these days. Every time I stoop over I feel that somebody's going to take a shot at me. I wonder why the beggars select me to shoot at. They're not always popping away at you, Browne. Why is it? I'm not looking for rubies every time I stoop over. They shot at me the other day when I got down to pick up my crop."

"It's all right so long as they don't kill you," was Browne's consoling remark.

"By Jove!" said Deppingham, starting up with a look of horror in his eyes, sudden comprehension rushing down upon him. "I wonder if they think I am *you,* Browne! Horrible!"

CHAPTER XII

WOMEN AND WOMEN

THE Enemy's office hours were from three to five in the afternoon. It was of no especial consequence to his clients that he frequently transferred the placard from the front of the company's bank to the more alluring doorway of the "American bar;" all was just and fair so long as he was to be found where the placard listed. Twice a week, Miss Pelham came down from the château in a gaily bedecked jinriksha to sit opposite to him in his stuffy corner of the banking house, his desk between them, her notebook trembling with propinquity. Mr. Britt generously loaned the pert lady to the Enemy in exchange for what he catalogued as "happy days."

Miss Pelham made it a point to look as fascinating as possible on the occasion of these interesting trips into the Enemy's territory.

The Enemy, doing his duty by his clients with a determination that seemed incontestable, suffered in the end because of his very zealousness. He took no time to analyse the personal side of his work; he dealt with the situation from the aspect of a man who serves but one interest, forgetting that it involved the weal of a thousand units. For that reason, he was the last to realise that an intrigue was shaping itself to combat his endeavours. Von Blitz, openly his friend and ally, despite their sad encounter, was the thorn which pricked the natives into a state of uneasiness and doubt as to their agent's sincerity.

Von Blitz, cunning and methodical, sowed the seed of distrust; it sprouted at will in the minds of the uncouth, suspicious islanders. They began to believe that no good could come out of the daily meetings of the three

lawyers. A thousand little things cropped out to prove that the intimacy between their man and the shrewd lawyers for the opposition was inimical to their best interests.

It was Von Blitz who told the leading men of the island that their wives—the Persians, the Circassians, the Egyptians and the Turkish houris—were in love with the tall stranger. It was he who advised them to observe the actions, to study the moods of their women.

If he spoke to one of the women, beautiful or plain, the whole male population knew of it, and smiled derisively upon the husband. Von Blitz had turned an adder loose among these men; it stung swiftly and returned to sting again.

The German knew the condition of affairs in his own household. His overthrow at the hands of the American had cost him more than physical ignominy; his wives openly expressed an admiration for their champion.

He knew too well the voluptuous nature of these creamy, unloved women, who had come down to the island of Japat in exchange for the baubles that found their way into the crowns of Persian potentates. He knew too well that they despised the men who called them wives, even though fear held them constantly in bond. Rebuffed, unnoticed, scorned, the women themselves began to suspect and hate each other. If he spoke kindly to one of them, be she fair and young or old and plain, the eyes of all the others blazed with jealousy. Every eye in Japat was upon him; every hand was turning against him.

It was Miss Pelham who finally took it upon herself to warn the lonely American. The look of surprise and disgust that came into his face brought her up sharply. She had been "taking" reports at his dictation; it was during an intermission of idleness on his part that she broached the subject.

"Miss Pelham," he said coldly, "will you be kind enough to carry my condolences to the ladies at court, and say that I recommend reading as an antidote for the poison which idleness produces. I've no doubt that they, with all the perspicacity of lonely and honest women, imagine that I maintain a harem as well as a bar-room. Kindly set them right about it. Neither my home nor my bar-room is open to ladies. If you don't mind we'll go on with this report."

Miss Pelham flushed and looked very uncomfortable. She had more to say, and yet hesitated about bearding the lion. He noticed the pain and uncertainty in her erstwhile coquettish eyes, and was sorry.

"I beg your pardon," he said gently.

"You're wrong about Lady Deppingham and Mrs. Browne," she began hurriedly. "They've never said anything mean about you. It was just my miserable way of putting it. The talk comes from the islanders. Mr. Bowles has told Mr. Britt and Mr. Saunders. He thinks Von Blitz is working against you, and he is sure that all of the men are furiously jealous."

"My dear Miss Pelham, you are very good to warn me," said he easily. "I have nothing to fear. The men are quite friendly and—" He stopped abruptly, his eyes narrowing in thought. A moment later he arose and walked to the little window overlooking the square. When he turned to her again his face wore a more serious expression. "Perhaps there is something in what you say. I'm grateful to you for preparing me." It had suddenly come to mind that the night before he had seen a man skulking in the vicinity of the bungalow. His body servant, Selim, had told him that very morning that this same man, a native, had stood for hours among the trees, apparently watching the house.

"I just thought I'd tell you," murmured Miss Pelham

nervously. "I—we don't want to see you get into trouble —none of us."

"Thank you." After a long pause, he went on, lowering his voice: "Miss Pelham, I have had a hard time here, in more ways than I care to speak of. It may interest you to know that I had decided to resign next month and go home. I'm a living man, and a living man objects to a living death. It's worse than I had thought. I came out here in the hope that there would be excitement, life, interest. The only excitement I get is when the ships call twice a month. I've even prayed that our beastly old volcano might erupt and do all sorts of horrible things. It might, at least, toss old Mr. Skaggs back into our midst; that would be a relief, even if he came up as a chunk of lava. But nothing happens —nothing! These Persian fairies you talk about—bah! I said I'd decided to resign, to get out of the infernal place. But I've changed my mind. I'll stick my time out. I've got three months longer to stay and I'll stay. If Von Blitz thinks he can drive me out, he's mistaken. I'll be here after you and your friends up there have sailed away, Miss Pelham—God bless you, you're all white!—and I'll be here when Von Blitz and his wives are dancing to the tunes I play. Now let's get back to work."

"All right; but please be careful," she urged. "Don't let them catch you unprepared. If you need help, I know the men at the château will come at your call."

One of those bright, enveloping smiles swept over his face—the smile that always carried the little stenographer away with it. A merry chuckle escaped his lips. "Thanks, but you forget that I can call out the American and British navies."

She looked doubtful. "I know," she said, "but I'm afraid Von Blitz is scuttling your ships."

"If poor little Bowles can conquer them with a red jacket that's too small for him, to say nothing of the fit it would give to the British army, I think I can scrape up a garment or two that will startle them in another way. Please don't worry about me. I shall call my clients together and have it out with them. If Von Blitz is working in the dark, I'll compel him to show his hand. And, Miss Pelham," he concluded very slowly, "I'll promise to use a club, if necessary, to drive the Persian ladies away. So please rest easy on my account."

Poor little Miss Pelham left him soon afterward, her head and heart ringing with the consciousness that she had at last driven him out of his customary reserve. Mr. Saunders was pacing the street in the neighbourhood of the bank. He had been waiting an hour or more, and he was green with jealousy. She nodded sweetly to him and called him to the side of her conveyance. "Don't you want to walk beside me?" she asked. And he trotted beside her like a faithful dog, all the way to the distant château.

The next morning the town bustled with a new excitement. A trim, beautiful yacht, flying strange colours, steamed into the little harbour of Aratat.

She came to anchor much closer in than ships usually ventured, and an officer put off in the small boat, heading for the pier, which was already crowded with the native women and children. Every one knew that the yacht brought the Princess who was to visit her ladyship; nothing else had been talked of among the women since the word first came down from the château that she was expected.

The Enemy came down from his bungalow, attracted by the unusual and inspiring spectacle of a ship at anchor. A line of anxiety marked his brow. Two figures had watched his windows all night long, sinister shadows

that always met his eye when it penetrated the gloom of the moonlit forest.

Lord and Lady Deppingham were on the pier before him. Excitement and joy illumined her face; her eyes were sparkling with anticipation; he could almost see that she trembled in her eagerness. He came quite close to them before they saw him. Exhilaration no doubt was responsible for the very agreeable smile of recognition that she bestowed upon him. Or, perhaps it was inspired by womanly pity for the man whose loneliness was even greater and graver than her own. The Enemy could do no less than go to them with his pleasantest acknowledgment. His rugged face relaxed into a most charming, winsome smile, half-diffident, half-assured.

He passed among the wives of his clients without so much as a sign of recognition, coolly indifferent to the admiring glances that sought his face. The dark, langourous eyes that flashed eager admiration a moment before now turned sullen with disappointment. He had ignored their owners; he had avoided them as if they were dust heaps in the path; he had spurned them as if they were dogs by the roadside. And yet he smiled upon the Englishwoman, he spoke with her, he admired her! The sharp intake of breath that swept through the crowd told plainer than words the story of the angry eyes that followed him to the end of the pier, where the officer's boat was landing.

"I have heard that you expect a visitor," said the Enemy in his most agreeable manner. Lady Deppingham had just told him that she had a friend aboard the yacht.

"Won't you go aboard with us," asked Deppingham, at a loss for anything better to say. The Enemy shook his head and smiled.

"You are very good, but I believe my place is here,"

he said, with a swift, sardonic glance toward his herd of followers. Lady Deppingham raised her delicate eyebrows and gave him the cool, intimate smile of comprehension. He flushed. "I am one of the lowly and the despised," he explained humbly.

"The Princess is to be with me for a month. We expect more sunshine than ever at the château," ventured her ladyship.

"I sincerely hope you may be disappointed," said he commiseratingly, fanning himself with his hat. She laughed and understood, but Deppingham was half way out to the yacht before it became clear to him that the Enemy hoped literally, not figuratively.

The Enemy sauntered back toward the town, past and through the staring crowd of women. Here and there in the curious throng the face of a Persian or an Egyptian stared at him from among the brown Arabians. There was no sign of love in the glittering eyes of these trafficked women of Japat. One by one they lifted their veils to their eyes and slowly faded into the side streets, each seeking the home she despised, each filled with a hatred for the man who would not feast upon her beauty.

The man, all unconscious of the new force that was to oppose him from that hour, saw the English people go aboard. He waited until the owner's launch was ready to return to the pier with its merry company, and then slowly wended his way to the "American bar," lonelier than ever before in his life. He now knew what it was that he had missed more than all else—Woman!

Britt and Saunders were waiting for him under the awning outside. They were never permitted to enter, except by the order or invitation of the Enemy. Selim stood guard and Selim loved the tall American, who could be and was kind to him.

"Hello," called Britt. "We saw you down there, but couldn't get near. By ginger, old man, I had no idea your Persians were so beautiful. They are Oriental gems of——"

"My Persians? What the devil do you mean, Britt? Come in and sit down; I want to talk to you fellows. See here, this talk about these women has got to be stopped. It's dangerous for you and it's dangerous for me. It is so full of peril that I don't care to look at them, handsome as you say they are. Do you know what I was thinking of as I came over here, after leaving one of the most charming of women?—your Lady Deppingham. I was thinking what a wretched famine there is in women. I'm speaking of women like Lady Deppingham and Mrs. Browne—neither of whom I know and yet I've known them all my life. The kind of women we love—not the kind we despise or pity. Don't you see? I'm hungry for the very sight of a woman."

"You see Miss Pelham often enough," said Saunders surlily. The Enemy was making a pitcher of lemonade.

"My dear Saunders, you are quite right. I *do* see Miss Pelham often enough. In my present frame of mind I'd fall desperately in love with her if I saw her oftener." Saunders blinked and glared at him through his pale eyes.

"My word," he said. Then he got up abruptly and stalked out of the room. Britt laughed immoderately.

"He's a lucky dog," reflected the Enemy. "You see, he loves her, Britt—he loves little Miss Pelham. Do you know what that means? It means everything is worth while. Hello! Here he is back! Come in, Saunders. Here's your lemo!"

Saunders was excited. He stopped in the doorway, but looked over his shoulder into the street.

"Come along," he exclaimed. "They're going up to

the château—the Princess and her party. My word, she's ripping!" He was off again, followed more leisurely by the two Americans.

At the corner they stopped to await the procession of palanquins and jinrikshas, which had started from the pier. The smart English victoria from the château, drawn by Wyckholme's thoroughbreds, was coming on in advance of the foot brigade. Half a dozen officers from the yacht, as many men in civilian flannels, and a small army of servants were being borne in the palanquins. In the rear seat of the victoria sat Lady Deppingham and one who evidently was the Princess. Opposite to them sat two older but no less smart-looking women.

Britt and the Enemy moved over to the open space in front of the mosque. They stood at the edge of and apart from the crowd of curious Moslems, who had moved up in advance of the procession.

"A gala day in Aratat," observed the stubby Mr. Britt. "We are to have the whole party over night up at the château. Perhaps the advent of strangers may heal the new breach between Mrs. Browne and Lady Deppingham. They haven't been on speaking terms since day before yesterday. Did Miss Pelham tell you about it? Well, it seems that Mrs. Browne thinks that Lady Agnes is carrying on a flirtation with Browne— Hello! By thunder, old man, she's—she's speaking to you!" He turned in astonishment to look at his companion's face.

The Enemy was staring, transfixed, at the young woman in white who sat beside Lady Deppingham. He seemed paralysed for the moment. Then his helmet came off with a rush; a dazed smile of recognition lighted his face. The very pretty young woman in the wide hat was leaning forward and smiling at him, a startled, uncertain look in her eyes. Lady Deppingham was glancing open-mouthed from one to the other. The

Enemy stood there in the sun, bareheaded, dazed, unbelieving, while the carriage whirled past and up the street. Both women turned to look back at him as they rounded the corner into the avenue; both were smiling.

"I must be dreaming," murmured the Enemy.

Britt took him by the arm. "Do you know her?" he asked. The Enemy turned upon him with a radiant gleam in his once sombre disconsolate eyes.

"Do you think I'd be grinning at her like a damned fool if I didn't? Why the dickens didn't you tell me that it was the Princess Genevra of Rapp-Thorberg who was coming?"

"Never thought of it. I didn't know you were interested in princesses, Chase."

CHAPTER XIII

CHASE PERFORMS A MIRACLE

HOLLINGSWORTH CHASE now felt that he was on neutral ground with the Princess Genevra. He could hardly credit his senses. When he left Rapp-Thorberg in disgrace some months before, his susceptibilities were in a most thoroughly chastened condition; a cat might look at a king, but he had forsworn peeping into the secret affairs of princesses.

His strange connection with the Skaggs will case is easily explained. After leaving Thorberg he went directly to Paris; thence, after ten days, to London, where he hoped to get on as a staff correspondent for one of the big dailies. One day at the Savage Club, he listened to a recital of the amazing conditions which attended the execution of Skaggs's will. He had shot wild game in South Africa with Sir John Brodney, chief counsellor for the islanders, and, as luck would have it, was to lunch with him on the following day at the Savoy.

His soul hungered for excitement, novelty. The next day, when Sir John suddenly proposed that he go out to Japat as the firm's representative, he leaped at the chance. There would be no difficulty about certain little irregularities, such as his nationality and the fact that he was not a member of the London bar: Sir John stood sponsor for him, and the islanders would take him on faith.

In truth, Rasula was more than glad to have the services of an American. He had heard Wyckholme talk of the manner in which civil causes were conducted and tried in the United States, and he felt that one Yankee on the scene was worth ten Englishmen at home. Doubt-

less he got his impressions of the genus Englishman by observation of the devoted Bowles.

The good-looking Mr. Chase, writhing under the dread of exposure as an international jackass, welcomed the opportunity to get as far away from civilisation as possible. He knew that the Prince Karl story would not lie dormant. It would be just as well for him if he were where the lash of ridicule could not reach him, for he was thin-skinned.

We know how and when he came to the island and we have renewed our short acquaintance with him under peculiar circumstances. It would be sadly remiss, however, to suppress the information that he could not banish the fair face of the Princess Genevra from his thoughts during the long voyage; nor would it be stretching the point to say that his day dreams were of her as he sat and smoked in his bungalow porch.

Before Chase left London, Sir John Brodney bluntly cautioned him against the dangers that lurked in Lady Deppingham's eyes.

"She won't leave you a peg to stand on, Chase, if you seek an encounter," he said. "She's pretty and she's clever, and she's made fools of better men than you, my boy. I don't say she's a bad lot, because she's too smart for that. But I will say that a dozen men are in love with her to-day. I suppose you'll say that she can't help that. I'm only warning you on the presumption that they don't seem to be able to help it, either. Remember, my boy, you are going out there to offset, not to beset, Lady Deppingham."

Chase learned more of the attractive Lady Agnes and her court before he left England. Common report credited her with being dangerously pretty, scandalously unwise, eminently virtuous, distractingly adventurous in the search for pleasure, charmingly unscrupulous in her

treatment of men's hearts, but withal, sufficiently clever to dodge the consequences of her widespread though gentle iniquities. He was quite prepared to admire her, and yet equally resolved to avoid her. Something told him that he was not of the age and valor of St. Anthony. He went out to Japat with a stern resolution to lead himself not into temptation; to steer clear of the highway of roses and stick close to the thorny paths below. Besides, he felt that he deserved some sort of punishment for looking so high in the Duchy of Rapp-Thorberg.

Not that he was in love with the proud Princess Genevra; he denied that to himself a hundred times a day as he sat in his bungalow and smoked the situation over.

He had proved to himself, quite beyond a doubt, that he was not in love, when, like a bolt from a clear sky, she stepped out of the oblivion into which he had cast her, to smile upon him without warning. It was most unfair. Her smile had been one of the most difficult obstacles to overcome in the effort to return a fair and final verdict.

As he sat in the shade of his bungalow porch on the afternoon of her arrival, he lamented that every argument he had presented in the cause of common sense had been knocked into a cocked hat by that electric smile. Could anything be more miraculous than that she should come to the unheard-of island of Japat—unless, possibly, that he should be there when she came? She was there for him to look upon and love and lose, just as he had dreamed all these months. It mattered little that she was now the wife of Prince Karl of Brabetz; to him she was still the Princess Genevra of Rapp-Thorberg.

If he had ever hoped that she might be more to him than an unattainable divinity, he was not fool enough to imagine that such a hope could be realised. She was a princess royal, he the slave who stood afar off and worshipped beyond the barrier of her disdain. In his leather pocket-

book lay the ever-present reminder that she could be no more than a dream to him. It was the clipping from a Paris newspaper, announcing that the Princess Genevra was to wed Prince Karl during the Christmas holidays.

He had seen the Christmas holidays come and go with the certain knowledge in his heart that they had given her to Brabetz as the most glorious present that man had ever received. If he was tormented by this thought at the happiest season of the year, his crustiness was attributed by others to the loneliness of his life on the island. If he grew leaner and more morose, no one knew that it was due to the passing of a woman.

Now she was come to the island and, so far as he had been able to see, there was no sign of the Prince of Brabetz in attendance. The absence of the little musician set Chase to thinking, then to speculating and, in the end, to rejoicing. Her uncle by marriage, an English nobleman of high degree, in gathering his friends for the long cruise, evidently had left the Prince out of his party, for what reason Chase could not imagine. To say that the omission was gratifying to the tall American would be too simple a statement. There is no telling to what heights his thoughts might have carried him on that sultry afternoon if they had not been harshly checked by the arrival of a messenger from the château. His blood leaped with anticipation. Selim brought word that the messenger was waiting to deliver a note. The Enemy, who shall be called by his true name hereafter, steadied himself and commanded that the man be brought forthwith.

Could it be possible—but no! *She* would not be writing to him. What a ridiculous thought! Lady Deppingham? Ah, there was the solution! She was acting as the go-between, she was the intermediary! She and the Princess had put their cunning heads together—but,

alas! His hopes fell flat as the note was put into his eager hand. It was from Britt.

Still he broke the seal with considerable eagerness. As he perused the somewhat lengthy message, his disappointment gave way to a no uncertain form of excitement; with its conclusion, he was on his feet, his eyes gleaming with enthusiasm.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "What luck! Things are coming my way with a vengeance. I'll do it this very night, thanks to Britt. And I must not forget Browne. Ah, what a consolation it is to know that there are Americans wherever one goes. Selim! Selim!" He was standing as straight as a corporal and his eyes were glistening with the fire of battle when Selim came up and forgot to salute, so great was his wonder at the transformation. "Get word to the men that I want every mother's son of 'em to attend a meeting in the market-place to-night at nine. Very important, tell 'em. Tell Von Blitz that he's *got* to be there. I'm going to show him and my picturesque friend, Rasula, that I am here to stay. And, Selim, tell that messenger to wait. There's an answer."

Long before nine o'clock the men of Japat began to gather in the market and trading place. It was evident that they expected and were prepared for the crisis. Von Blitz and Rasula, who had played second fiddle until he could stand it no longer, were surprised and somewhat staggered by the peremptory tone of the call, but could see no chance for the American to shift his troublesome burden. The subdued, sullen air of the men who filled the torchlighted market-place brooded ill for any attempt Chase might make to reconcile them to his peculiar views, no matter how thoroughly they may have been misunderstood by the people. Explanations were easy to make, but difficult to establish. Chase could convince them, no doubt, that he was not guilty of double dealing,

but it would be next to impossible to extinguish the blaze of jealousy that was consuming the reason of the head men of Japat, skilfully fed by the tortured Von Blitz and blown upon ceaselessly by the breath of scandal.

Five hundred dark, sinister men were gathered in knots about the square. They talked in subdued tones and looked from fiery eyes that belied their outward calm.

Hollingsworth Chase, attended by Selim, came down from his mountain retreat. He heard the sibilant hiss of the scorned Persians as he passed among them on the outskirts of the crowd; he observed the threatening attitude of the men who waited and watched; he saw the white, ugly face of Von Blitz quivering with triumph; he felt the breath of disaster upon his cheek. And yet he walked among them without fear, his head erect, his eyes defiant. He knew that a crisis had come, but he smiled as he walked up to meet it, with a confidence that was sublime.

The market-place was a large open tract in the extreme west end of the town, some distance removed from the business street and the pier. On two sides were the tents of the fruit peddlers and the vegetable hucksters, negroes who came in from the country with their produce. The other sides were taken up by the fabric and gewgaw venders, while in the centre stood the platforms from which the auctioneers offered treasures from the Occident. Through a break in the foothills, the château was plainly discernible, the sea being obscured from view by the dense forest that crowned the cliffs.

Chase made his way boldly to the nearest platform, exchanging bows with the surprised Von Blitz and the saturnine Rasula, who stood quite near. The men of Japat slowly drew close in as he mounted the platform. The gleaming eyes that shone in the light of the torches did not create any visible sign of uneasiness in the Ameri-

can, even though down in his heart he trembled. He knew the double chance he was to take. From where he stood looking out over those bronze faces, he could pick out the scowling husbands who hated him because their wives hated them. He could see Ben Ali, the master of two beauties from Teheran and the handsome dancing girl from Cairo; there was Amriph, who basked erstwhile in the sunshine of a bargain from Damascus and a seraph from Bagdad, but who now groped about in the blackness of their contempt; and others, all of whom felt in their bitter hearts that their misery was due to the prowess of this gallant figure.

Afar off stood the group of women who had inspired this hatred and distrust. Behind them, despised and uncountenanced by the Oriental elect, were crowded the native women, who, down in their hearts, loathed the usurpers. It was Chase's hope that the husbands of these simple women would ultimately stand at his side in the fight for supremacy—and they were vastly in the majority. If he could convince these men that his dealings with them were honest, Von Blitz could "go hang."

He faced the crowd, knowing that all there were against him. "Von Blitz!" he called suddenly. The German started and stepped back involuntarily, as if he had been reprimanded.

"I've called this meeting in order to give you a chance to say to my face some of the things you are saying behind my back. Thank God, all of you men understand English. I want you to hear what Von Blitz has to say in public, and then I want you to hear what I say to him. Incidentally, you may have something to say for yourselves. In the first place, I want you all to understand just how I stand in respect to my duties as your legal representative. Von Blitz and Rasula and others, I hear, have undertaken to discredit my motives as the agent of

your London advisers. Let me say, right here, that the man who says that I have played you false in the slightest degree, is a liar—a *damned* liar, if you prefer it that way. You have been told that I am selling you out to the lawyers for the opposition. That is lie number one. You have been led to believe that I make false reports to your London solicitors. Lie number two. You have been poisoned with the story that I covet certain women in this town—too numerous to mention, I believe. That is lie number three. They are all beautiful, my friends, but I wouldn't have one of 'em as a gift.

"For the past few nights my home has been watched. I want to announce to you that if I see anybody hanging around the bungalow after to-day, I'm going to put a bullet through him, just as I would through a dog. Please bear that in mind. Now, to come down to Von Blitz. You can't drive me out of this island, old man. You have lied about me ever since I beat you up that night. You are sacrificing the best interests of these people in order to gratify a personal spite, in order to wreak a personal vengeance. Stop! You can talk when I have finished. You have set spies upon my track. You have told these husbands that their wives need watching. You have turned them against me and against their wives, who are as pure and virtuous as the snow which you never see. (God, forgive me!) All this, my friend, in order to get even with me. I don't ask you to retract anything you've said. I only intend you to know that I can crush you as I would a peanut, if you know what that is. You——"

Von Blitz, foaming with rage, broke in: "I suppose you vill call out der warships! We are not fools! You can fool some of——"

"Now, see here, Von Blitz, I'll show whether I can call out a warship whenever I need one. I have never intended

to ask naval help except in case of an attack by our enemies up at the château. You can't believe that I seek to turn those big guns against my own clients—the clients I came out here to serve with my life's blood if necessary. But, hear me, you Dutch lobster! I can have a British man-of-war here in ten hours to take you off this island and hang you from a yard arm on the charge of conspiracy against the Crown."

Von Blitz and Rasula laughed scornfully and turned to the crowd. The latter began to harangue his fellows.

"This man is a—a—" he began.

"A bluff!" prompted Von Blitz, glaring at his tall accuser.

"A bluff," went on Rasula. "He can do none of these things. Nor can the Americans at the château. I know that they are liars. They——"

"I'll make you pay for that, Rasula. Your time is short. Men of Japat, I don't want to serve you unless you trust me——"

A dozen voices cried: "We don't trust you!" "Dog of a Christian! Son of a snake!" Von Blitz glowed with satisfaction.

"One moment, please! Rasula knows that I came out here to represent Sir John Brodney. He knows how I am regarded in London. He is jealous because I have not listened to his chatter. I am not responsible for the probable delay in settling the estate. If you are not very careful, you will ruin every hope for success that you may have had in the beginning. The Crown will take it out of your hands. You've got to show yourselves worthy of handling the affairs of this company. You can't do it if you listen to such carrion as Von Blitz and Rasula. Oh, I'm not afraid of you! I know that you have written to Sir John, Rasula, asking that I be recalled. He won't recall me, rest assured, unless he throws

up the case. I have his own letters to prove that he is satisfied with my work out here. I am satisfied that there are enough fair-minded men in this crowd to protect me. They will stand by me in the end. I call upon——"

But a howl of dissent from the throng brought him up sharply. His face went white and for a moment he feared the malevolence that stared at him from all sides. He looked frequently in the direction of the distant château. An anxious gleam came into his eyes—was it of despair? A hundred men were shouting, but no one seemed to have the courage to break over the line that he had drawn. Knives slipped from many sashes; Von Blitz was screaming with insane laughter, pointing his finger at the discredited American. While they shouted and cursed, his gaze never left the cleft in the hills. He did not attempt to cry them down; the effort would have been in vain. Suddenly a wild, happy light came into his anxious, searching eyes. He gave a mighty shout and raised his hands, commanding silence.

Selim, clinging to his side, also had seen the sky-rocket which arose up from the château and dropped almost instantly into the wall of trees.

There was something in the face and voice of the American that quelled the riotous disorder.

"You fools!" he shouted, "take warning! I have told you that I would not turn the guns of England and America against you unless you turned against me. I am your friend—but, by the great Mohammed you'll pay for my life with every one of your own if you resort to violence. Listen! To-day I learned that my life was threatened. I sent a message in the air to the nearest battleship. There is not an hour in the day or night that I or the people in the château cannot call upon our governments for help. My call to-day has been answered, as I knew it would be. There is always a warship

near at hand, my friends. It is for you to say whether a storm of shot and shell——"

Von Blitz leaped upon a platform and shouted madly: "Fools! Don't believe him! He cannot bring der ships here! He lies—he lies! He——"

At that moment, a shrill clamour of voices arose in the distance—the cries of women and children. Chase's heart gave a great bound of joy. He knew what it meant. The crowd turned to learn the cause of this sudden disturbance. Across the square, coming from the town, raced the women and children, gesticulating wildly and screaming with excitement.

Chase pointed his finger at Von Blitz and shouted:

"I can't, eh? There's a British warship standing off the harbour now, and her guns are trained——"

But he did not complete the astounding, stupefying sentence. The women were screaming:

"The warship! The warship! Fly! Fly!"

In a second, the entire assemblage was racing furiously, doubtingly, yet fearfully toward the pier. Von Blitz and Rasula shouted in vain. They were left with Chase, who smiled triumphantly upon their ghastly faces.

"Gentlemen, they are not deceived. There *is* a warship out there. You came near to showing your hand to-night. Now come along with me, and I'll show my hand to you. Rasula, you'd better draw in your claws. You're entitled to some consideration. But Von Blitz! Jacob, you are standing on very thin ice. I can have you shot to-morrow morning."

Von Blitz sputtered and snarled. "It is all a lie! It is a trick!" He would have drawn his revolver had not Rasula grasped his arm. The native lawyer dragged him off toward the pier, half-doubting his own senses.

Just outside the harbour, plainly distinguishable in the

moonlight, lay a great cruiser, her searchlights whipping the sky and sea with long white lashes.

The gaping, awe-struck crowd in the street parted to let Chase pass through on his way to the bungalow. He was riding one of Wyckholme's thoroughbreds, a fiery, beautiful grey. His manner was that of a medieval conqueror. He looked neither to right nor to left, but kept his eyes straight ahead, ignoring the islanders as completely as if they did not exist.

"It's more like a Christian Endeavour meeting than it was ten minutes ago," he was saying to himself, all the time wondering when some reckless unbeliever would hurl a knife at his back. He gravely winked his eye in the direction of the château. "Good old Britt!" he muttered in his exultation.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LANTERN ABOVE

CHASE sat for hours on his porch that night, gazing down upon the château. Lights gleamed in a hundred of its windows. He knew that revelry held forth in what he was pleased enough to call the feudal castle, and yet his heart warmed toward the gay people who danced and sang while he thirsted at the gates.

The bitterness of his own isolation, the ostracism that circumstance had forced upon him, would have been maddening on this night had not all rancour been tempered by the glorious achievement in the market-place. He wondered if the Princess knew what he had dared and what he had accomplished in the early hours of the night. He wondered if they had pointed out his solitary light to her—if, now and then, she bestowed a casual glance upon that twinkling star of his. The porch lantern hung almost directly above his head.

He was not fool enough to think that he had permanently pulled the wool over the eyes of the islanders. Sooner or later they would come to know that he had tricked them, and then—well, he could only shake his head in dubious contemplation of the hundred things that might happen. He smiled as he smoked, however, for he looked down upon a world that thought only of the night at hand.

The château was indeed the home of revelry. The pent-up, struggling spirits of those who had dwelt therein for months in solitude arose in the wild stampede for frée-dom. All petty differences between Lady Deppingham and Drusilla Browne, and they were quite common now, were forgotten in the whirlwind of relief that came with

the strangers from the yacht. Mrs. Browne's good-looking eager husband revelled in the prospect of this delirious night—this almost Arabian night. He was swept off his feet by the radiant Princess—the Scheherezade of his boyhood dreams; his blithe heart thumped as it had not done since he was a boy. The Duchess of N—— and the handsome Marchioness of B—— came into his tired, hungry life at a moment when it most needed the light. It was he who fairly dragged Lady Agnes aside and proposed the banquet, the dance, the concert —everything—and it was he who carried out the hundred spasmodic instructions that she gave.

Late in the night, long after the dinner and the dance, the tired but happy company flocked to the picturesque hanging garden for rest and the last refreshment. Every man was in his ducks or flannels, every woman in the coolest, the daintiest, the sweetest of frocks. The night was clear and hot; the drinks were cold.

The hanging garden was a wonderfully constructed open-air plaisance suspended between the château itself and the great cliff in whose shadow it stood. The cliff towered at least three hundred feet above the roof of the spreading château, a veritable stone wall that extended for a mile or more in either direction. Its crest was covered with trees beyond which, in all its splendour, rose the grass-covered mountain peak. Here and there, along the face of this rocky palisade, tiny streams of water leaked through and came down in a never-ending spray, leaving the rocks cool and slimy from its touch.

Near the château there was a real waterfall, reminding one in no small sense of the misty veils at Lauterbrunnen or Giesbach. The swift stream which obtained life from these falls, big and little, ran along the base of the cliff for some distance and was then diverted by means of a deep, artificial channel into an almost complete circuit

of the château, forming the moat. It sped along at the foot of the upper terrace, a wide torrent that washed between solid walls of masonry which rose to a height of not less than ten feet on either side. There were two drawbridges—seldom used but always practicable. One, a handsome example of bridge building, crossed the current at the terminus of the grand approach which led up from the park; the other opened the way to the stables and the servants' quarters at the rear. A small, stationary bridge crossed the vicious stream immediately below the hanging garden and led to the ladders by which one ascended to the caverns that ran far back into the mountain.

Two big, black, irregular holes in the face of the cliff marked the entrance to these deep, rambling caves, wonderful caverns wrought by the convulsions of the dead volcano, cracks made by these splintering earthquakes when the island was new.

The garden hung high between the building and the cliff, swung by a score of great steel cables. These cables were riveted soundly in the solid rock of the cliff at one end and fastened as safely to the stone walls of the château at the other. It swung staunchly from its moorings, with the constancy of a suspension bridge, and trembled at the slightest touch.

It was at least a hundred feet square. The floor was covered with a foot or more of soil in which the rich grass and plants of the tropics flourished. There were tiny flower beds in the center; baby palms, patchouli plants and a maze of interlacing vines marked the edges of this wonderful garden in mid-air. Cool fountains sprayed the air at either end of the green enclosure: the illusion was complete.

The walls surrounding the garden were three feet high and were intended to represent the typical English gar-

den wall of brick. To gain access to the hanging garden, one crossed a narrow bridge, which led from the second balcony of the château. There was not an hour in the day when protection from the sun could not be found in this little paradise.

Bobby Browne was holding forth, with his usual exuberance, on the magnificence of the British navy. The Marquess of B——, uncle to the Princess, swelled with pride as he sat at the table and tasted his julep through the ever-obliging straw. The Princess, fanning herself wearily, leaned back and looked up into the mystic night, the touch of dreamland caressing her softly. The others —eight or ten men and half as many women—listened to the American in twice as many moods.

"There she is now, sleeping out there in the harbour, a great, big thing with the kindest of hearts inside of those steel ribs. Her Majesty's ship, the *King's Own!* Think of it! She convoys a private yacht; she stops off at this beastly island to catch her breath and to see that all are safe; then she charges off into the horizon like a bird that has no home. Ah, I tell you, it's wonderful. Samrat, fill the Count's glass again. May I offer you a cigarette, Princess? By the way, I wonder how Chase came off with his side show?"

"Saunders tells me that he was near to being butchered, but luck was with him," said Deppingham. "His ship came home."

"It was a daring trick. I'm glad he pulled it off. He's a man, that fellow is," said Browne. "See, Princess, away up there in the mountain is his home. There's a light—see it? He keeps rather late hours, you see."

"Tell me about him," said the Princess suddenly. She arose and walked to the vine-covered wall, followed by Bobby Browne.

"I don't know much to tell you," said he. "He's made an enemy or two and they are trying to drive him out. I'd be rather sorry to see him go. We've asked him down here, just because we can't bear to think of a fellow-creature wasting his days in utter loneliness. But he has, so far, declined with thanks. The islanders are beginning to hate him. They distrust him, Britt says. Of course, you know why we are here, you——"

"Every one knows, Mr. Browne. You are the most interesting quartette in the world just now. Every one is wondering how it is going to end. What a pity you *can't* marry Lady Agnes."

"Oh, I say!" protested Browne. She laughed merrily.

"But how dull it must be for Mr. Chase! Does he complain?"

"I can't say that he does. Britt—that's my lawyer—Britt says he's never heard a murmur from him. He takes his medicine with a smile. I like that sort of a fellow and I wish he'd be a little more friendly. It couldn't interfere with his duties and I don't see where the harm would come in for any of us."

"He has learned to know and keep his place," said she coolly. Perhaps she was thinking of his last night in the palace garden. Away up there in the darkness gleamed his single, lonely, pathetic little light. "Isn't it rather odd, Mr. Browne, that his light should be burning at two o'clock in the morning? Is it his custom to sit up——"

"I've never noticed it before, now you speak of it. I hope nothing serious has happened to him. He may have been injured in—I say, if you don't mind, I'll ask some one to telephone up to his place. It would be beastly to let him lie up there alone if we can be of any service to——"

"Yes, do telephone," she broke in. "I am sure Lady

Deppingham will approve. No, thank you; I will stand here a while. It is cool and I love the stars." He hurried off to the telephone, more eager than ever, now that she had started the new thought in his brain. Five minutes later he returned to her, accompanied by Lady Agnes. She was still looking at—the stars? The little light among the trees could easily have been mistaken for a star.

"Lady Deppingham called him up," said Bobby.

"And he answered in person," said her ladyship. "He seemed strangely agitated for a moment or two, Genevra, and then he laughed—yes, laughed in my face, although it was such a long way off. People can do what they like over the telephone, my dear. I asked him if he was ill, or had been hurt. He said he never felt better in his life and hadn't a scratch. He laughed—I suppose to show me that he was all right. Then he said he was much obliged to me for calling him up. He'd quite forgotten to go to bed. He asked me to thank you for bringing a warship. You saved his life. Really, one would think you were quite a heroine—or a Godsend or something like that. I never heard anything sweeter than the way he said good-night to me. There!"

The light in the bungalow bobbed mysteriously for an instant and then went out.

"How far is it from here?" asked the Princess abruptly.

"Nearly two miles as the crow flies—only there are no crows here. Five miles by the road, I fancy, isn't it, Bobby? I call him Bobby, you know, when we are all on good terms. I don't see why I shouldn't if you stop to think how near to being married to each other we are at this very instant."

"I wonder if help could reach him quickly in the event of an attack?"

"It could, if he'd have the kindness to notify us by 'phone," said Browne.

"But he wouldn't telephone to us," said Lady Deppingham ruefully. "He's not so communicative as that."

"Surely he would call upon you for help if he——"

"You don't know him, Genevra."

The Princess smiled in a vague sort of way. "I've met him quite informally, if you remember."

"I should say it was informally. It's the most delicious story I've ever heard. You must tell it to Mr. Browne, dear. It's all about the Enemy in Thorberg, Mr. Browne. There's your wife calling, Bobby. She wants you to tell that story again, about the bishop who rang the door bell."

The next morning the captain of the *King's Own* came ashore and was taken to the château for dejeuner. Late in the afternoon, the Marquess and his party, saying farewell to the Princess and the revived legatees, put out to the yacht and steamed away in the wake of the great warship. The yacht was to return in a month, to pick up the Princess.

Genevra, her maids, her men and her boxes, her poodle and her dachshund, were left behind for the month of March. Not without misgiving, it must be said, for the Marquess, her uncle, was not disposed to look upon the island situation as a spot of long-continued peace, even though its hereditary companion, Prosperity, might reign steadily. But she refused to listen to their warnings. She smiled securely and said she had come to visit Lady Agnes and she would not now disappoint her for the world. All this, and much more, passed between them.

"You won't be able to get help as cleverly and as timely as that American chap got it last night," protested the Marquess. "Warships don't browse around

like gulls, you know.
leave you here——"

"Karl is of a very f
Genevra sweetly. "H
Chase, because you a
duced him to forgive
American—although
it—and I'm quite su
he should come upon
uncle."

"And leave you to t
I can't think of it! I

"Take him away,
some other day,'" sh

And so they sailed
intended from the be
beside her on the pier
to the yacht.

"By Jove, Genevra,
in this beastly place,
honest eyes. "There
should come up. W
Chase did last nigh
Chase is ripping, by
he'd open up his hea
American bar of his.'

"He owes us someth
him last night," said
his warship story, a
and Britt."

"And the fairy
ham.

"I am doubly glad
miracle," said Genev
at the lounging na

miracle that I should come upon mine ancient champion in this unheard-of corner of the globe?"

"I'd like to hear the story of Chase and his Adventures in the Queen's Garden," reminded Bobby Browne.

"I'll tell it to you to-night, my children," said the Princess, as they started for the palanquins.

Hollingsworth Chase dodged into the American bar just in time to escape the charge of spying.

CHAPTER XV

MR. SAUNDERS HAS A PLAN

Miss Pelham's affair with Thomas Saunders by this time had reached the stage where observers feel a hesitancy about twitting the parties most concerned. Even Britt, the bravest jester of them all, succumbed to the prevailing wind when he saw how it blew. He got in the lee of popular opinion and reefed the sails of the good ship *Tantalus*.

"Let true love take its course," he remarked to Bobby Browne one day, after they had hearkened to Deppingham's furious complaint that he couldn't find Saunders when he wanted him if he happened to be wanted simultaneously by Miss Pelham. "Miss Pelham is a fine girl. Your wife likes her and looks after her. She's a clever girl, much cleverer than Saunders would be if he were a girl. She's found out that he earns a thousand a year and that his mother is a very old woman. That shows foresight. She says she's just crazy about London, although she doesn't know where Hammersmith is. That shows discretion. She's anxious to see the boats at Putney and talks like an encyclopædia about Kew Gardens. That shows diplomacy. You see, Saunders lives in Hammersmith, not far from the bridge, all alone with his mother, who owns the house and garden. It's all very appealing to Miss Pelham, who has got devilish tired of seeing the universe from a nineteenth story in Broadway. I heard her tell Saunders that she keeps a couple of geranium pots on the window sill near which she sits all day. She says she's keen about garden flowers. Looks serious to me."

"She's a very nice girl," agreed Bobby Browne.

"A very saucy one," added Deppingham, who had come a severe cropper in his single attempt to interest her in a mild flirtation.

"She's off with Saunders now," went on Britt. "That's why you can't find him, my lord. If you really want him, however, I think you can reach him by strolling through the lower end of the park and shouting. For heaven's sake, don't fail to shout."

"I *do* want him, confound him. I want to ask him how many days there are left before our time is up on the island. Demmed annoying, that I can't have legal advice when I——"

"How many days have you been here?"

"How the devil should I know? That's what we've got Saunders here for. He's supposed to tell us when to go home, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"It isn't going to be so bad, now that the Princess has come to cheer us up a bit," put in Bobby Browne. "Life has a new aspect."

"I say, Browne," burst out Deppingham, irrelevantly, his eyeglass clenched in the tight grasp of a perplexed frown, "would you mind telling me that story about the bishop and the door bell again?"

Britt laughed hoarsely, his chubby figure shivering with emotion. "You've heard that story ten times, to my certain knowledge, Deppingham."

His lordship glared at him. "See here, Britt, you'll oblige me by——"

"Very well," interrupted Britt readily. "I forget once in a while."

"The trouble with you Americans is this," growled Deppingham, turning to Browne and speaking as if Britt was not in existence: "you have no dividing line. 'Gad, you wouldn't catch Saunders sticking his nose in where he wasn't wanted. He's——"

"I was under the impression that you wanted him," interrupted Britt, most good-naturedly, his stubby legs far apart, his hands in his pockets.

"I say, Browne, would you mind coming into my room? I want to hear that story, but I'm hanged if I'll listen to it out here."

The oft-told story of the bishop and the bell, of course, has no bearing upon the affairs of Miss Pelham and Thomas Saunders. And, for that matter, the small affairs of that worthy couple have little or no bearing upon the chief issue involved in this tale. Nobody cares a rap whether Saunders, middle-aged and unheroic bachelor, with his precise little "burnsides," won the heart of the pert Miss Pelham, precise in character if not always so in type. It is of no serious consequence that she kept him from calling her Minnie until the psychological moment, and it really doesn't matter that Thomas was days in advancing to the moment. It is only necessary to break in upon them occasionally for the purpose of securing legal advice, or the equally unromantic desire to have a bit of typewriting done. We are not alone in this heartless and uncharitable obtrusion. Deppingham, phlegmatic soul, was forever disturbing Saunders with calls to duty, although Saunders was brutish enough, in his British way, to maintain (in confidence, of course) that he was in the employ of Lady Deppingham, or no one at all. Nevertheless, he always lived under the shadow of duty. At any moment, his lordship was liable to send for him to ask the time of day—or some equally important question. And this brings us to the hour when Saunders unfolded his startling solution to the problem that confronted them all.

First, he confided in Britt, soberly, sagely and in perfect good faith. Britt was bowled over. He stared at Saunders and gasped. Nearly two minutes elapsed be-

fore he could find words to reply; which proves conclusively that it must have been something of a shock to him. When at last he did express himself, however, there was nothing that could have been left unsaid—absolutely nothing. He went so far as to call Saunders a doddering fool and a great many other things that Saunders had not in the least expected.

The Englishman was stubborn. They had it back and forth, from legal and other points of view, and finally Britt gave in to his colleague, reserving the right to laugh when it was all over. Saunders, with a determination that surprised even himself, called for a conference of all parties in Wyckholme's study, at four o'clock.

It was nearly six before Lady Deppingham arrived, although she had but forty steps to traverse. Mr. and Mrs. Browne were there fully half an hour earlier. Deppingham appeared at four and then went away. He was discovered asleep in the hanging garden, however, and at once joined the others. Miss Pelham was present with her note book. The Princess was invited by Lady Deppingham, who held no secrets from her, but the royal young lady preferred to go out walking with her dogs. Pong, the red cocker, attended the session and twice snarled at Mr. Saunders, for no other reason than that it is a dog's prerogative to snarl when and at whom he chooses.

"Now, what's it all about, Saunders?" demanded Deppingham, with a wide yawn. Saunders looked hurt.

"It is high time we were discussing some way out of our difficulties," he said. "Under ordinary circumstances, my lady, I should not have called into joint consultation those whom I may be pardoned for designating as our hereditary foes. Especially Mr. Browne. But, as my plan to overcome the obstacle which has always stood in our way requires the co-operation of Mr. Browne, I felt

safe in asking him to be present. Mrs. Browne's conjugal interest is also worthy of consideration." Mrs. Browne sniffed perceptibly and stared at the speaker. "But five weeks remain before our stay is over. We all know, by this time, that there is little or no likelihood of the estate being closed on schedule time. I think it is clear, from the advices we have, that the estate will be tied up in the courts for some time to come, possibly a year or two. From authoritative sources, we learn that the will is to be broken. The apparent impossibility of marriage between Lady Deppingham and Mr. Browne naturally throws our joint cause into jeopardy. There would be no controversy, of course, if the terms of the will could be carried out in that respect. The islanders understand our position and seem secure in their rights. They imagine that they have us beaten on the face of things. Consequently they are jolly well upset by the news that we are to contest the will in the home courts. They are, from what I hear and observe, pretty thoroughly angered. Now, the thing for us to do is to get married."

He came to this conclusion with startling abruptness. Four of his hearers stared at him in blank amazement.

"Get married?" murmured first one, then another.

"Are you crazy?" demanded Browne. Britt was grinning broadly.

"Certainly not!" snapped Saunders.

"Oh, by Jove!" exclaimed Deppingham, relieved. "I see. You mean *you* contemplate getting married. I congratulate you. You gave me quite a shock, Saund——"

"I don't mean anything of the sort, my lord," said Saunders, getting very red in the face. Miss Pelham looked up from her note book quickly. He winked at her, and her ladyship saw him do it. "I mean that it is high time that Lady Deppingham and Mr. Browne were

getting married. We haven't much time to spare. It——"

"Good Lord!" gasped Bobby Browne. "You *are* crazy, after all."

"Open the window and give some air," said Britt coolly.

"See here, Saunders, what the devil is the matter with you?" roared Deppingham.

"My lord, I am here to act as your legal adviser," said Saunders with dignity. "May I be permitted to proceed?"

"Rather queer legal advice, 'pon my word."

"Please let him explain," put in Mrs. Browne, whose sense of humour was strongly attracted by this time. "If there is anything more to be learned concerning matrimony, I'd like to know it."

"Yes, Mr. Saunders, you may proceed," said Lady Agnes, passing a hand over her bewildered eyes.

"Thank you, my lady. Well, here it is in a nutshell: I have not spoken of it before, but you and Mr. Browne can very easily comply with the provisions of the will. You can be married at any time. Now, I——"

"And where do I come in?" demanded Deppingham, sarcastically.

"Yes, and I?" added Mrs. Browne. "You forget us, Mr. Saunders."

"I include Mrs. Browne," amended Deppingham. "Are we to be assassinated? By Jove, clever idea of yours, Saunders. Simplifies matters tremendously."

"I hear no objection from the heirs," remarked Saunders, meaningly. Whereupon Lady Agnes and Bobby came out of their stupor and protested vigorously.

"Miss Pelham," said Britt, breaking in sharply, "I trust you are getting all of this down. I wish to warn you, ladies and gentlemen, that *I* expect to overthrow the will on the ground that there is insanity on both sides. You'll oblige me by uttering just what you feel."

"Why, this is perf
"Our souls are not c
"Your minds are
said Britt calmly.
"My plan is very
"Demmed simple,"
"We are living o
tised and tolerated.
custom and beat th
the ticket!"
Of course, this
brought forth a s
but Saunders held
jeering remarks i
floor once more.
"You have only t
ism, or whatever it
get married and c
say, you could resu
after a few weeks,
"I pay Lady De
that it would be m
tian again," said I
Englishwoman.
"How very swe
which made Drusi
"You don't need
Saunders, getting
"Well, that's a
Browne, a flash i
"I never heard
tered Deppingha
that.
"On the other h
it would be quite

"Stop him, for heaven's sake," screamed Lady Agnes, bursting into uncontrollable laughter.

"Stop him? Why?" demanded her husband, suddenly seeing what he regarded as a rare joke. "Let's hear him out. By Jove, there's more to it than I thought. Go on, Saunders."

"Of course, if you are going to be nasty about it—" began Saunders in a huff.

"I can't see anything nasty about it," said Browne. "I'll admit that our wife and our husband may decide to be stubborn and unreasonable, but it sounds rather attractive to me."

"Robert!" from his wife.

"He's only joking, Mrs. Browne," explained Deppingham magnanimously. "Now, let me understand you, Saunders. You say they can be married according to the customs—which, I take it, are the laws—of the islanders. Wouldn't they be remanded for bigamy sooner or later?"

"They don't bother the Mormons, do they, Mr. Browne?" asked Saunders triumphantly. "Well, who is going to object among us?"

"I am!" exclaimed Deppingham. "Your plan provides Browne with two charming wives and gives me but one. There's nothing to compel Mrs. Browne to marry me."

"But, my lord," said Saunders, "doesn't the plan give Lady Deppingham two husbands? It's quite a fair division."

"It would make Lord Deppingham my husband-in-law, I imagine," said Drusilla quaintly. "I've always had a horror of husbands-in-law."

"And you would be my wife-in-law," supplemented Lady Agnes. "How interesting!"

"Saunders," said Deppingham soberly, "I must oppose your plan. It's quite unfair to two innocent and unin-

volved parties. What have we done that we should be exempt from polygamy?"

"You are not exempt," exclaimed the harassed solicitor. "You are merely not *obliged* to, that's all. You can do as you choose about it, I'm sure. I'm sorry my plan causes so much levity. It is meant for the good of our cause. The will doesn't say how many wives Mr. Browne shall have. It simply says that Agnes Ruthven shall be his wife. He isn't restricted, you know. He can be a polygamist if he likes. I ask Mr. Britt if there is anything in the document which specifically says he shall *not* have more than one wife. Polygamy is quite legal in the United States, and he is an American citizen. I read about a Mormon chap marrying a whole Sunday-school class not long ago."

"You're right," said Britt. "The will doesn't specify. But, my dear Saunders, you are overlooking your own client in this plan."

"I don't quite understand, Mr. Britt."

"As I understand the laws on this island—the church laws at least—a man can have as many wives as he likes. Well, that's all very well for Mr. Browne. But isn't it also a fact that a woman can have no more than one husband? Lady Deppingham has one husband. She can't take another without first getting rid of this one."

"And, I say, Saunders," added Deppingham, "the native way of disposing of husbands is rather trying, I've heard. Six or seven jabs with a long knife is the most approved way, isn't it, Britt?"

"Imagine Lady Deppingham going to the altar all covered with gore!" said Britt.

"Saunders," said Deppingham, arising and lighting a fresh cigarette, "you have gone clean daft. You're loony with love. You've got marriage on the brain. I'd advise you to take some one for it."

"Do you mean that for me, Lord Deppingham?" demanded Miss Pelham sharply. She glared at him and then slammed her note book on the table. "You can josh Mr. Saunders, but you can't josh me. I'm sick of this job. Get somebody else to do your work after this. I'm through."

"Oh!" exclaimed every one in a panic. It took nearly ten minutes to pacify the ruffled stenographer. She finally resumed her place at the table, but her chin was in the air and she turned the pages with a vehemence that left nothing to the imagination.

"I can arrange everything, my lady, so that the ceremony will be regular," pleaded the unhappy Saunders. "You have only to go through the form——"

"But what kind of a form does she follow in stabbing me to mincemeat? That's the main law point," said Deppingham. "You seem to forget that I am still alive."

"Perhaps we could arrange for a divorce all round," cried Saunders, suddenly inspired.

"On what grounds?" laughed Browne.

"Give me time," said the lawyer.

"It's barely possible that there is no divorce law in Japat," remarked Britt, keenly enjoying his confrère's misery.

"Are you quite sure?"

"Reasonably. If there was such a law, I'll bet my head two-thirds of the men in Aratat would be getting rid of wives before night."

Britt, after this remark, sat very still and thoughtful. He was turning over the divorce idea in his mind. He had ridiculed the polygamy scheme, but the divorce proposition might be managed.

"I'm tired," said Lady Deppingham suddenly. She yawned and stretched her arms. "It's been very entertaining, Saunders, but, really, I think we'd better dress

for dinner. Come,
Princess?"

"With pleasure, if
ham's life."

"On condition that
very prettily and a
amazing good grace
her eyes.

"Your ladyship," c
approve of my plan

"Heartily!" she e
laughs. "The only
it leaves out my hu
very nice people, Sa
siderate of them.
American's arm and
Deppingham's eyes
wife as he followed
sauntered slowly ou
back but once at the

"I would have wo
fered," almost waile
with mortification.

"I'm getting to ha
ally. "And the otl
mind them, Tommy

Lady Deppingham
quite unexpectedly.
ing against the sto
the field glasses in t
held back and wat
early evening fell u
and sinuous in the c
her face and hands
reflecting east, her

the dark green of the mountain. She was dressed in white—a modish gown of rich Irish lace. One instantly likened this rare young creature to a rare old painting.

Genevra smiled securely in her supposed aloofness from the world. Then, suddenly moved by a strange impulse, she gently waved her handkerchief, as if in greeting to some one far off in the gloaming. The action was a mischievous one, no doubt, and it had its consequences—rather sudden and startling, if the observers were to judge by her subsequent movements. She lowered the glass instantly; there was a quick catch in her breath—as if a laugh had been checked; confusion swept over her, and she drew back into the shadows as a guilty child might have done. They distinctly heard her murmur as she crossed the flags and disappeared through the French window, without seeing them:

"Oh, dear, what a crazy thing to do!"

Genevra, peering through the glasses, had discovered the figure of Chase on the bungalow porch. She was amused to find that he, from his distant post, was also regarding the château through a pair of glasses. A spirit of adventure, risk, mischief, as uncontrolled as breath itself, impelled her to flaunt her handkerchief. That treacherous spirit deserted her most shamelessly when her startled eyes saw that he was waving a response. She laid awake for a long time that night wondering what he would think of her for that wretched bit of frivolity. Then at last a new thought came to her relief, but it did not give her the peace of mind that she desired.

He may have mistaken her for Lady Deppingham.

CHAPTER XVI

TWO CALLS FROM THE ENEMY

DEPPINGHAM was up and about quite early the next morning—that is, quite early for him. He had his rolls and coffee and strolled out in the shady park for a smoke. The Princess, whose sense of humiliation had not been lessened by the fitful sleep of the night before, was walking in the shade of the trees on the lower terrace, beyond the fountains and the artificial lake. A great straw hat, borrowed from Lady Agnes, shaded her face from the glare of the mid-morning sun. Farther up the slope, one of the maids was playing with the dogs. She waved her hand gaily and paused to wait for him.

"I was thinking of you," she said in greeting, as he came up.

"How nice you are," he said. "But, my dear, is it wise in you to be thinking of us handsome devils? It's a most dangerous habit—thinking of other men."

"But, Deppy, dear, the Prince isn't here," she said, falling into his humour. "That makes quite a difference, doesn't it?"

"Your logic is splendid. Pray resume your thoughts of me—if they were pleasant and agreeable. I'll not blow on you to Karl."

"I was just thinking what a lucky fellow you are to have such a darling as Agnes for a wife."

"You might as well say that Agnes ought to feel set up because Pong has a nice coat. By the way, I have a compliment for you—no, not one of their beastly tradelasts! Browne says your hair is more beautiful than Pong's. That's quite a compliment. Titian never even dreamed of hair like Pong's."

"You know, Deppy," she said with a pout, "I am very unhappy about my hair. It is quite red. I don't see why I should have hair like that of a red cocker. It seems so animalish."

"Rubbish! Why should you complain? Look at my hair. It's been likened more than once to that of a jersey cow."

"Oh, how I adore jersey cows! Now, I wouldn't mind that a bit."

They were looking toward the lower gates while carrying on this frivolous conversation. A man had just entered and was coming toward them. Both recognised the tall figure in grey flannels. Deppingham's emotion was that of undisguised amazement; Genevra's that of confusion and embarrassment. She barely had recovered her lost composure when the newcomer was close upon them.

There was nothing in the manner of Chase, however, to cause the slightest feeling of uneasiness. He was frankness itself. His smile was one of apology, almost of entreaty; his broad grass helmet was in his hand and his bow was one of utmost deference.

"I trust I am not intruding," he said as he came up. His gaze was as much for Deppingham as for the Princess, his remark quite impersonal.

"Not at all, not at all," said Deppingham quickly, his heart leaping to the conclusion that the way to the American bar was likely to be opened at last. "Charmed to have you here, Mr. Chase. You've been most unneighbourly. Have you been presented to her Highness, the—Oh, to be sure. Of course you have. Stupid of me."

"We met ages ago," she said with an ingenuous smile, which would have disarmed Chase if he had been prepared for anything else. As a matter of fact, he had ap-

proached her in the light of an adventurer who expects nothing and grasps at straws.

"In the dark ages," said he so ruefully that her smile grew. He had come, in truth, to ascertain why her husband had not come with her.

"But not the forgotten variety, I fancy," said Deppingham shrewdly.

"It would be impossible for the Princess to forget the greatest of all fools," said Chase.

"He was no worse than other mortals," said she.

"Thank you," said Chase. Then he turned to Lord Deppingham. "My visit requires some explanation, Lord Deppingham. You have said that I am unneighbourly. No doubt you appreciate my reasons. One has to respect appearances," with a dry smile. "When one is in doubt he must do as the Moslems do, especially if the Moslems don't want him to do as he wants to do."

"No doubt you're right, but it sounds a bit involved," murmured Deppingham. "Now that you are here you must do as the Moslems don't. That's our Golden Rule. We'll consider the visit explained, but not curtailed. Lady Deppingham will be delighted to see you. Are you ready to come in, Princess?"

They started toward the château, keeping well in the shade of the boxed trees, the Princess between the two men.

"I say, Chase, do you mind relieving my fears a bit? With all due respect to your estimable clients, it occurs to me that they are likely to break over the traces at any moment, and raise the very old Harry at somebody else's expense. I'd like to know if my head is really safe. Since your experience the other night, I'm a bit apprehensive."

"I came to see you in regard to that very thing, Lord Deppingham. I don't want to alarm you, but I do not

like the appearance of things. They don't trust me and they hate you—quite naturally. I'm rather sorry that our British man-of-war is out of reach. Pray, don't be alarmed, Princess. It is most improbable that anything evil will happen. And, in any event, we can hold out against them until relief comes."

"We?" demanded Deppingham.

"Certainly. If it comes to an assault of any kind upon the château, I trust that I may be considered as one of you. I won't serve assassins and bandits—at least, not after they've got beyond my control. Besides, if the worst should come, they won't discriminate in my favour."

"Why do you stay here, Mr. Chase?" asked the Princess. "You admit that they do not like you or trust you. Why do you stay?"

"I came out here to escape certain consequences," said he candidly. "I'll stay to enjoy the uncertain ones. I am not in the least alarmed on my own account. The object of my visit, Lord Deppingham, is to ask you to be on your guard up here. After the next steamer arrives, and they learn that Sir John will not withdraw me in submission to Rasula's demand, with the additional news that your solicitors have filed injunctions and have begun a bitter contest that may tie up the estate for years—then, I say, we may have trouble. It is best that you should know what to expect. I am not a traitor to my cause, in telling you this; it is no more than I would expect from you were the conditions reversed. Moreover, I do not forget that you gave me the man-of-war opportunity. That was rather good fun."

"It's mighty decent in you, Chase, to put us on our guard. Would you mind talking it over with Browne and me after luncheon? You'll stay to luncheon, of course?"

"Thank you. It may be my death sentence, but I'll stay."

In the wide east gallery they saw Lady Deppingham and Bobby Browne, deeply engrossed in conversation. They were seated in the shade of the wistaria, and the two were close upon them before they heard their voices. Deppingham started and involuntarily allowed his hand to go to his temple, as if to check the thought that flitted through his brain.

"Good Lord," he said to himself, "is it possible that they are considering that demmed Saunders's proposition? Surely they can't be thinking of that!"

As he led the way across the green, Browne's voice came to them distinctly. He was saying earnestly:.

"The mere fact that we have come out to this blessed isle is a point in favour of the islanders. Chase won't overlook it and you may be sure Sir John Brodney is making the most of it. Our coming is a guarantee that we consider the will valid. It is an admission that we regard it as sound. If not, why should we recognise its provisions, even in the slightest detail? Britt is looking for hallucinations and all——"

"Sh!" came in a loud hiss from somewhere near at hand, and the two in the gallery looked down with startled eyes upon the distressed face of Lord Deppingham. They started to their feet at once, astonishment and wonder in their faces. They could scarcely believe their eyes. The Enemy!

He was smiling broadly as he lifted his helmet, smiling in spite of the discomfort that showed so plainly in Deppingham's manner.

Chase was warmly welcomed by the two heirs. Lady Agnes was especially cordial. Her eyes gleamed joyously as she lifted them to meet his admiring gaze. She was amazingly pretty. The conviction that Chase had

mistaken her for Lady Agnes, the evening before, took a fresh grasp upon the mind of the Princess Genevra. A shameless wave of relief surged through her heart.

Chase was presented to Drusilla Browne, who appeared suddenly upon the scene, coming from no one knew where. There was a certain strained look in the Boston woman's face and a suspicious redness near the bridge of her little nose. As she had not yet acquired the Boston habit of wearing glasses, whether she needed them or not, the irritation could hardly be attributed to tight *pince nez*. Genevra made up her mind on the instant that Drusilla was making herself unhappy over her good-looking husband's attentions to his co-legatee.

"It's very good of you," said the Enemy, after all of them had joined in the invitation. There was a peculiar twinkle in his eye as he asked this rather confounding question: "Why is it that I am more fortunate than your own attorneys? I am but a humble lawyer, after all, no better than they. Would you mind telling me why I am honoured by an invitation to sit at the table with you?" The touch of easy sarcasm was softened by the frank smile that went with it. Deppingham, having been the first to offend, after a look of dismay at his wife, felt it his duty to explain.

"It's—it's—er—oh, yes, it's because you're a diplomat," he finally remarked in triumph. It was a grand recovery, thought he. "Saunders is an ass and Britt would be one if Browne could only admit it, as I do. Rubbish! Don't let that trouble you. Eh, Browne?"

"Besides," said Bobby Browne breezily, "I haven't heard of your clients inviting *you* to lunch, Mr. Chase. The cases are parallel."

"I'm not so sure about his clients' wives," said Deppingham, with a vast haw-haw! Chase looked extremely uncomfortable.

"I am told that some of them are very beautiful," said Genevra sedately.

"Other men's wives always are, I've discovered," said Chase gallantly.

The party had moved over to the great stone steps which led down into the gardens. Chase was standing beside Lady Deppingham and both of them were looking toward his distant bungalow. He turned to the Princess with the remark:

"That is my home, Princess. It is the first time I have seen it from your point of view, Lady Deppingham. I must say that it doesn't seem as far from the château to the bungalow as it does from the bungalow to the château. There have been times when the château seemed to be thousands of miles away."

"When in reality it was at your very feet," she said with a bright look into his eyes. For some unaccountable reason, Genevra resented that look and speech. Perhaps it was because she felt the rift of an undercurrent.

"Is that really where you live?" she asked, so innocently that Chase had difficulty in controlling his expression.

At that instant something struck sharply against the stone column above Chase's head. At least three persons saw the little puff of smoke in the hills far to the right. Every one heard the distant crack of a rifle. The bullet had dropped at Chase's feet before the sound of the report came floating to their ears. No one spoke as he stooped and picked up the warm, deadly missile. Turning it over in his fingers, an ugly thing to look at, he said coolly, although his cheek had gone white:

"With Von Blitz's compliments, ladies and gentlemen. He is calling on me, by proxy."

"Good God, Chase," cried Browne, "they're trying to murder us. Get back, every one! Inside the doors!"

The women, white-faced and silent for the moment, turned to follow the speaker.

"I'm sorry to bring my troubles to your door," said Chase. "It was meant for me, not for any of you. The man who fired that did not intend to kill me. He was merely giving voice to his pain and regret at seeing me in such bad company." He was smiling calmly and did not take a single step to follow them to safety.

"Come in, Chase! Don't stand out there to be shot at."

"I'll stay here for a few minutes, Mr. Browne, if you don't mind, just to convince you all that the shot was not intended to kill. They're not ready to kill me yet. I'm sure Lord Deppingham will understand. He has been shot at often enough since he came to the island."

"By Jove, I should rather say I have," blurted out Deppingham. " 'Pon my word, they had a shot at me every time I tried to pluck a flower at the roadside. I've got so used to it that I resent it when they don't have a try at me."

"Think it was Von Blitz?" asked Browne.

"No. He couldn't hit the château at two hundred yards. It is a native. They shoot like fury." He lighted a cigarette and coolly leaned against the column, his gaze bent on the spot where the smoke had been seen. The others were grouped inside the doors, where they could see without being seen. A certain sense of horror possessed all of the watchers. It was as if they were waiting to see him fall with a bullet in his breast—executed before their eyes. Several minutes passed.

"For heaven's sake, why does he stand there?" cried the Princess at last. "I can endure it no longer. It may be as he says it is, but it is foolhardy to stand there and taunt the pride of that marksman. I can't stay here and wait for it to come. How can——"

"He's been there for ten minutes, Princess," said Browne. "Plenty of time for another try."

"I am not afraid to stand beside him," said Lady Agnes suddenly. She had conquered her dread and saw the chance for something theatrical. Her husband grasped her arm as she started toward the Enemy.

"None of that, Aggie," he said sharply.

Before they were aware of her intention, the Princess left the shelter and boldly walked across the open space to the side of the man. He started and opened his lips to give vent to a sharp command.

"It is so easy to be a hero, Mr. Chase, when one is quite sure there is no real danger," she said, with distinct irony in her tones. "One can afford to be melodramatic if he knows his part so well as you know yours."

Chase felt his face burn. It was a direct declaration that he had planned the whole affair in advance. He flicked the ashes from his cigarette and then tossed it away, hesitating long before replying.

"Nevertheless, I have the greatest respect for the courage which brings you to my side. I daresay you are quite justified in your opinion of me. It all must seem very theatrical to you. I had not thought of it in that light. I shall now retire from the centre of the stage. It will be perfectly safe for you to remain here—just as it was for me." He was leaving her without another word or look. She repented.

"I am sorry for what I said," she said eagerly. "And—" she looked up at the hills with a sudden widening of her eyes—"I think I shall not remain."

He waited for her and they crossed to the entrance together.

Luncheon was quite well over before the spirits of the party reacted from the depression due to the shooting. Chase made light of the occurrence, but sought to impress upon the others the fact that it was prophetic of more serious events in the future. In a perfectly cold-

blooded manner he told them that the islanders might rise against them at any time, overstepping the bounds of England's law in a return to the primeval law of might. He advised the occupants of the château to exercise extreme caution at all times.

"The people are angry and they will become desperate. Their interests are mine, of course. I am perfectly sincere in saying to you, Lady Deppingham, and to you, Mr. Browne, that in time they will win out against you in the courts. But they are impatient; they are not the kind who can wait and be content. It is impossible for you to carry out the provisions of the will, and they know it. That is why they resent the delays that are impending."

Deppingham told him of the scheme proposed by Saunders, treating it as a vast joke. Chase showed a momentary sign of uneasiness, but covered it instantly by laughing with the others. Strange to say, he had been instructed from London to look out for just such a coup on the part of the heirs. Not that the marriage could be legally established, but that it might create a complication worth avoiding.

He could not help looking from Lady Deppingham to Bobby Browne, a calculating gleam in his grey eyes. How very dangerous she could be! He was quite ready to feel very sorry for pretty Mrs. Browne. Browne, of course, revealed no present symptom of surrender to the charms of his co-legatee. Later on, he was to recall this bit of calculation and to enlarge upon it from divers points of view.

Just now he was enjoying himself for the first time since his arrival in Japat. He sat opposite to the Princess; his eyes were refreshing themselves after months of fatigue; his blood was coursing through new veins. And yet, his head was calling his heart a fool.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PRINCESS GOES GALLOPING

A WEEK passed—an interesting week in which few things happened openly, but in which the entire situation underwent a subtle but complete change. The mail steamer had come and gone. It brought disconcerting news from London. Chase was obliged to tell the islanders that notice of a contest had been filed. The lineal heirs had pooled their issues and were now fighting side by side. The matter would be in chancery for months, even years. He could almost feel the gust of rage and disappointment that swept over the island—although not a word came from the lips of the sullen population. The very silence was foreboding.

He did not visit the château during that perplexing week. It was hard, but he resolutely kept to the path of duty, disdaining the pleasures that beckoned to him. Every day he saw and talked with Britt and Saunders. They, as well as the brisk Miss Pelham, gave him the "family news" from the château. Saunders, when he was not moping with the ague of love, indulged in rare exhibitions of joy over the turn affairs were taking with his client and Bobby Browne. It did not require extraordinary keenness on Chase's part to gather that her ladyship and Browne had suddenly decided to engage in what he would call a mild flirtation, but what Saunders looked upon as a real attack of love.

"If I had the nerve, I'd call Browne good and hard," said Britt, over his julep. "It isn't right. It isn't decent. No telling what it will come to. The worst of it is that his wife doesn't blame him. She blames her. They disappear for hours at a time and they've always

got their heads together. I've noticed it for a month, but it's got worse in the last week. Poor little Drusilla. She's from Boston, Chase, and can't retaliate. Besides, Deppingham wouldn't take notice if she tried."

"There's one safeguard," said Chase. "They can't elope on this island."

"They can't, eh? Why, man, they could elope in the château and nobody could overtake 'em. You've no idea how big it is. The worst of it is, Deppingham has got an idea that they may try to put him out of the way—him and Drusilla. Awful, isn't it?"

"Perfect rot, Britt. You'll find that it turns out all right in the end. I'd bank on Lady Deppingham's cool little head. Browne may be mad, but she isn't."

"It won't help me any unless both of 'em are mad," said Britt, with a wry face. "And, say, by the way, Saunders is getting to dislike you intensely."

"I can't help it if he loves the only stenographer on the island," said Chase easily. "You seem to be the only one who isn't in hot water all the time, Britt."

"Me and the Princess," said Britt laconically. Chase looked up quickly, but the other's face was as straight as could be. "If you were a real gentleman you would come around once in a while and give her something to talk to, instead of about."

"Does she talk about me?" quite steadily.

"They all do. I've even heard the white handmaidens discussing you in glowing terms. You're a regular matinee hero up there, my——"

"Selim!" broke in Chase. The Arab came to the table immediately. "Don't put so much liquor in Mr. Britt's drinks after this. Mostly water." Britt grinned amiably.

They sipped through their straws in silence for quite

a while. Both were thinking of the turn affairs were taking at the château.

"I say, Britt, you're not responsible for this affair between Browne and Lady Deppingham, are you?" demanded Chase abruptly.

"I? What do you mean?"

"I was just wondering if you could have put Browne up to the game in the hope that a divorce or two might solve a very difficult problem."

"Now that you mention it, I'm going to look up the church and colonial divorce laws," said Britt non-committally, after a moment.

"I advise you to hurry," said Chase coolly. "If you can divorce and marry 'em inside of four weeks, with no court qualified to try the case nearer than India, you are a wonder."

Chase was in the habit of visiting the mines two or three times a week during work hours. The next morning after his conversation with Britt, he rode out to the mines. When he reached the brow of the last hill, overlooking the wide expanse in which the men toiled, he drew rein sharply and stared aghast at what lay before him.

Instead of the usual activity, there was not a man in sight. It was some time before his bewildered brain could grasp the meaning of the puzzle. Selim, who rode behind, came up and without a word directed his master's attention to the long ridge of trees that bordered the broken hillsides. Then he saw the miners. Five hundred half-naked brown men were congregated in the shade of the trees, far to the right. By the aid of his glasses he could see that one of their number was addressing them in an earnest, violent harangue. It was not difficult, even at that distance, to recognise the speaker as Von Blitz. From time to time, the silent watchers saw

the throng exhibit violent signs of emotion. There were frequent gesticulations, occasional dances; the faint sound of shouts came across the valley.

Chase shuddered. He knew what it meant. He turned to Selim, who sat beside him like a bronze statue, staring hard at the spectacle.

"How about Allah now, Selim?" he asked sententiously.

"Allah is great, Allah is good," mumbled the Moslem youth, but without heart.

"Do you think He can save me from those dogs?" asked the master, with a kindly smile.

"Sahib, do not go among them to-day," implored Selim impulsively.

"They are expecting me, Selim. If I don't come, they will know that I have funked. They'll know I am afraid of them."

"Do not go to-day," persisted Selim doggedly. Suddenly he started, looking intently to the left along the line of the hill. Chase followed the direction of his gaze and uttered a sharp exclamation of surprise.

Several hundred yards away, outlined against the blue sky beyond the knob, stood the motionless figure of a horse and its rider—a woman in a green habit. Chase could hardly believe his eyes. It did not require a second glance to tell him who the rider was; he could not be mistaken in that slim, proud figure. Without a moment's hesitation he turned his horse's head and rode rapidly toward her. She had left the road to ride out upon the crest of the green knob. Chase was in the mood to curse her temerity.

As he came up over the slope, she turned in the saddle to watch his approach. He had time to see that two grooms from the stables were in the road below her. There was a momentary flash of surprise and confusion in her eyes, succeeded at once by a warm glow of excite-

ment. She smiled as he drew up beside her, not noticing his unconscious frown.

"So those are the fabulous mines of Japat," she said gaily, without other greeting. "Where is the red glow from the rubies?"

His horse had come to a standstill beside hers. Scarcely a foot separated his boot from her animal's side. If she detected the serious look in his face, she chose to ignore it.

"Who gave you permission to ride so far from the château?" he demanded, almost harshly. She looked at him in amazement.

"Am I a trespasser?" she asked coldly.

"I beg your pardon," he said quickly. "I did not mean to offend. Don't you know that it is not safe for you to——"

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed. "I am not afraid of your shadows. Why should they disturb me?"

"Look!" He pointed to the distant assemblage. "Those are not shadows. They are men and they are making ready to transform themselves into beasts. Before long they will strike. Von Blitz and Rasula have sunk my warships. You *must* understand that it is dangerous to leave the château on such rides as this. Come! We will start back together—at once."

"I protest, Mr. Chase, that you have no right to say what I shall do or——"

"It isn't a question of right. You are nearly ten miles from the château, in the most unfrequented part of the island. Some day you will not return to your friends. It will be too late to hunt for you then."

"How very thrilling!" she said with a laugh.

"I beg of you, do not treat it so lightly," he said, so sharply that she flushed. He was looking intently in the direction of the men. She was not slow to see that their position had been discovered by the miners. "They have

seen us," he said briefly. "It is quite possible that they do not mean to do anything desperate at this time, but you can readily see that they will resent this proof of spying on our part. They mistake me for one of the men from the château. Will you come with me now?"

"It seems so absurd—but I will come, of course. I have no desire to cause you any uneasiness."

As they rode swiftly back to the tree-lined road, a faint chorus of yells came to them across the valley. For some distance they rode without speaking a word to each other. They had traversed two miles of the soft dirt road before Chase discovered that Selim was the only man following them. The two men who had come out with the Princess were not in sight. He mentioned the fact to her, with a peculiar smile on his lips. They slackened the pace and Chase called Selim up from behind. The little Arab's face was a study in its display of unwonted emotion.

"Excellency," he replied, in answer to Chase's question, his voice trembling with excitement, "they left me at the bend, a mile back. They will not return to the château."

"The dogs! So, you see, Princess, your escort was not to be trusted," said Chase grimly.

"But they have stolen the horses," she murmured irrelevantly. "They belong to the château stables."

"Which direction did they take, Selim?"

"They rode off by the Carter's highway, Excellency, toward Aratat."

"It may not appeal to your vanity, your Highness, but it is my duty to inform you that they have gone to report our clandestine meeting."

"Clandestine! What do you mean, sir?"

"The islanders are watching me like hawks. Every time I am seen with any one from the château, they add a

fresh nail to the coffin they are preparing for me. It's really more serious than you imagine. I must, therefore, forbid you to ride outside of the park."

They rode swiftly for another mile, silence being unbroken between them. She was trying to reconcile her pride to the justice of his command.

"I daresay you are right, Mr. Chase," she said at last, quite frankly. "I thank you."

"I am glad that you understand," he said simply. His gaze was set straight before him, keen, alert, anxious. They were riding through a dark stretch of forest; the foliage came down almost to their faces; there was an almost impenetrable green wall on either side of them. He knew, and she was beginning to suspect, that danger lurked in the peaceful, sweet-smelling shades.

"I begin to fear, Mr. Chase," she said, with a faint smile, "that Lady Deppingham deceived me in suggesting Japat as a rest cure. It may interest you to know that the court at Rapp-Thorberg has been very gay this winter. Much has happened in the past few months."

"I know," he said briefly, almost bitterly.

"My brother, Christobal, has been with us after two years' absence. He came with his wife from the ends of the earth, and my father forgave him in good earnest. Christobal was very disobedient in the old days. He refused to marry the girl my father chose for him. Was it not foolish of him?"

"Not if it has turned out well in the end."

"I daresay it has—or will. She is delightful. My father loves her. And my father—the Grand Duke, I should say—does not love those who cross him. One is very fortunate to have been born a prince." He thought he detected a note of bitterness in this raillery.

"I can conceive of no greater fortune than to have been born Prince Karl of Brabetz," he said lightly. She

flashed a quick glance at his face, her eyes narrowing in the effort to divine his humour. He saw the cloud which fell over her face and was suddenly silent, contrite for some unaccountable reason.

"As I was saying," she resumed, after a moment, "Lady Deppingham has lured me from sunshowers into the tempest. Mr. Chase," and her face was suddenly full of real concern, "is there truly great danger?"

"I fear so," he answered. "It is only a question of time. I have tried to check this uprising, but I've failed. They don't trust me. Last night Von Blitz, Rasula and three others came to the bungalow and coolly informed me that my services were no longer required. I told them to—to go to——"

"I understand," she said quickly. "It required courage to tell them that." He smiled.

"They protested friendship, but I can read very well as I run. But can't we find something more agreeable to talk about? May I say that I have not seen a newspaper in three months? The world has forgotten me. There must be news that you can give me. I am hungry for it."

"You poor man! No newspapers! Then you don't know what has happened in all these months?"

"Nothing since before Christmas. Would you like to see a bit of news that I clipped from the last Paris paper that came into my hands?"

"Yes," she said, vaguely disturbed. He drew forth his pocketbook and took from its interior a small bit of paper, which he handed to her, a shamed smile in his eyes. She read it at a glance and handed it back. A faint touch of red came into her cheeks.

"How very odd! Why should you have kept that bit of paper all these months?"

"I will admit that the announcement of the approach-

ing nuptials of two persons whom I had met so casually may seem a strange thing to cherish, but I am a strange person. You have been married nearly three months," he said reflectively. "Three months and two days, to be precise."

She laughed outright, a bewitching, merry laugh that startled him.

"How accurate you would be," she exclaimed. "It would be a highly interesting achievement, Mr. Chase, if it were only borne out by facts. You see, I have not been married so much as three minutes."

He stared at her, uncomprehending.

She went on: "Do you consider it bad luck to postpone a wedding?"

Involuntarily he drew his horse closer to hers. There was a new gleam in his eyes; her blood leaped at the challenge they carried.

"Very bad luck," he said quite steadily; "for the bridegroom."

In an instant they seemed to understand something that had not even been considered before. She looked away, but he kept his eyes fast upon her half-turned face, finding delight in the warm tint that surged so shamelessly to her brow. He wondered if she could hear the pounding of his heart above the thud of the horses' feet.

"We are to be married in June," she said somewhat defiantly. Some of the light died in his eyes. "Prince Karl was very ill. They thought he might die. His—his studies—his music, I mean, proved more than he could carry. It—it is not serious. A nervous breakdown," she explained haltingly.

"You mean that he—" he paused before finishing the sentence—"collapsed?"

"Yes. It was necessary to postpone the marriage. He will be quite well again, they say—by June."

Chase thought of the small, nervous, excitable prince, and in his mind there arose a great doubt. They might pronounce him cured, but would it be true? "I hope he may be fully recovered, for your sake," he managed to say.

"Thank you." After a long pause, she turned to him again and said: "We are to live in Paris for a year or two at least."

Then Chase understood. Prince Karl would not be entirely recovered in June. He did not ask, but he knew in some strange way that his physicians were there and that it would be necessary for him to be near them.

"He is in Paris now?"

"No," she answered, and that was all. He waited, but she did not expand her confidence.

"So it is to be in June?" he mused.

"In June," she said quietly. He sighed.

"I am more than sorry that you are a princess," he said boldly.

"I am quite sure of that," she said, so pointedly that he almost gasped. She was laughing comfortably, a mischievous gleam in her dark eyes. His laugh was as awkward as hers was charming.

"You *do* like to be flattered," he exclaimed at random. "And I shall take it upon myself to add to to-day's measure." He again drew forth his pocketbook. She looked on curiously. "Permit me to restore the lace handkerchief which you dropped some time ago. I've been keeping it for myself, but——"

"My handkerchief?" she gasped, her thoughts going at once to that ridiculous incident of the balcony. "It must belong to Lady Deppingham."

"Oh, it isn't the one you used on the balcony," he protested coolly. "It antedates that adventure."

"Balcony? I don't understand you," she contested.

"Then you are exceedingly obtuse."

"I never dreamed that you could see," she confessed pathetically.

"It was extremely nice in you and very presumptuous in me. But, your highness, this is the handkerchief you dropped in the Castle garden six months ago. Do you recognise the perfume?"

She took it from his fingers gingerly, a soft flush of interest suffusing her cheek. Before she replied, she held the dainty bit of lace to her straight little nose.

"You are very sentimental," she said at last. "Would you care to keep it? It is of no value to me."

"Thanks, I will keep it."

"I've changed my mind," she said inconsequently, stuffing the fabric in her gauntlet. "You have something else in that pocketbook that I should very much like to possess."

"It can't be that Bank of England——"

"No, no! You wrapped it in a bit of paper last week and placed it there for safe keeping."

"You mean the bullet?"

"Yes. I should like it. To show to my friends, you know, when I tell them how near you were to being shot." Without a word he gave her the bullet that had dropped at his feet on that first day at the château. "Thank you. Oh, isn't it a horrid thing! Just to think, it might have struck you!" She shuddered.

He was about to answer in his delirium when a sharp turn in the road brought them in view of the château. Not a hundred yards ahead of them two persons were riding slowly, unattended, very much occupied in themselves. Their backs were toward Chase and the Princess, but it was an easy matter to recognise them. The glance which shot from the Princess to Chase found a peculiar smile disappearing from his lips.

"I know what you are thinking," she cried impulsively. "You are wrong—very wrong, Mr. Chase. Lady Deppingham is a born coquette—a born trifler. It is ridiculous to think that she can be seriously engaged in a——"

"It isn't that, Princess," he interrupted, a dark look in his eyes. "I was merely wondering whether dear little Mrs. Browne is as happy as she might be."

Genevra was silent for a moment.

"I had not thought of that," she said soberly.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BURNING OF THE BUNGALOW

He went in and had tiffin with them in the hanging garden. Deppingham was surly and preoccupied. Drusilla Browne was unusually vivacious. At best, she was not volatile; her greatest accomplishment lay in the ability to appreciate what others had to say. This in itself is a treat so unusual that one feels like commending the woman who carries it to excess.

Her husband, aside from a natural anxiety, was the same blithe optimist as ever. He showed no sign of restraint, no evidence of compunction. Chase found himself secretly speculating on the state of affairs. Were the two heirs working out a preconceived plan or were they, after all, playing with the fires of spring? He recalled several of Miss Pelham's socialistic remarks concerning the privileges of the "upper ten," the intolerance of caste and the snobbish morality which attaches folly to none but the girl who "works for a living."

Immediately after tiffin, Genevra carried Lady Deppingham off to her room. When they came forth for a proposed stroll in the grounds, Lady Agnes was looking very meek and tearful, while the Princess had about her the air of one who has conquered by gentleness. In the upper corridor, where it was dark and quiet, the wife of Deppingham halted suddenly and said:

"It has been so appallingly dull, Genevra, don't you understand? That's why. Besides, it isn't necessary for her to be so horrid about it. She——"

"She isn't horrid about it, dear. She's most self-sacrificing."

"Rubbish! She talks about the Puritans, and all that

sort of thing. I know what she means. But, there's no use talking about it. I'll do as you say—command, I mean. I'll try to be a prude. Heaven alone knows what a real prude is. I don't. All this tommy-rot about Bobby and me wouldn't exist if that wretched Chase man had been a little more affable. He never noticed us until you came. No wife to snoop after him and—why, my dear, he would have been ideal."

"It's all very nice, Agnes, but you forget your husband," said Genevra, with a tolerant smile.

"Deppy? Oh, my dear," and she laughed gaily once more. "Deppy doesn't mind. He rather likes me to be nice to other men. That is, if they are nice men. Indeed, I don't forget Deppy! I shall remember him to my dying day."

"Your point of view is quite different from that of a Boston wife, I'd suggest."

"Certainly. We English have a colonial policy. We've spread out, my dear."

"You are frivolous once more, Agnes."

"Genevra," said Lady Agnes solemnly, "if you'd been on a barren island for five months as I have, with nothing to look at but your husband and the sunsets, you would not be so hard on me. I wouldn't take Drusilla's husband away from her for the world; I wouldn't even look at him if he were not on the barren island, too. I've read novels in which a man and woman have been wrecked on a desert island and lived there for months, even years, in an atmosphere of righteousness. My dear, those novelists are ninnies. Nobody could be so good as all that without getting wings. And if they got wings they'd soon fly away from each other. Angels are the only creatures who can be quite circumspect, and they're not real, after all, don't you know. Drusilla may not know it yet, but she's not an angel, by any means; she's real

and doesn't know it, that's all. I am real and know it only too well. That's the difference. Now, come along. Let's have a walk. I'm tired of men and angels. That's why I want you for awhile. You've got no wings, Genevra; but it's of no consequence, as you have no one to fly away from."

"Or to, you might add," laughed Genevra.

"That's very American. You've been talking to Miss Pelham. She's always adding things. By the way, Mr. Chase sees quite a lot of her. She types for him. I fancy she's trying to choose between him and Mr. Saunders. If you were she, dear, which would you choose?"

"Mr. Saunders," said Genevra promptly. "But if I were myself, I'd choose Mr. Chase."

"Speaking of angels, he must have wings a yard long. He has been chosen by an entire harem and he flies from them as if pursued by the devil. I imagine, however, that he'd be rather dangerous if his wings were to get out of order unexpectedly. But he's nice, isn't he?"

The Princess nodded her head tolerantly.

Her ladyship went on: "I don't want to walk, after all. Let us sit here in the corridor and count the prisms in the chandeliers. It's such fun. I've done it often. You can imagine how gay it has been here, dear. Have you heard the latest gossip? Mr. Britt has advanced a new theory. We are to indulge in double barrelled divorce proceedings. As soon as they are over, Mr. Browne and I are to marry. Then we are to hurry up and get another divorce. Then we marry our own husband and wife all over again. Isn't it exciting? Only, of course, it isn't going to happen. It would be so frightfully improper—shocking, don't you know. You see, I should go on living with my divorced husband, even after I was married to Bobby. I'd be obliged to do that in order to

give Bobby grounds for a divorce as soon as the estate is settled. There's a whole lot more to Mr. Britt's plan that I can't remember. It's a much gentler solution than the polygamy scheme that Mr. Saunders proposes; I will say that for it. But Deppy has put his foot down hard. He says he had trouble enough getting me to marry him the first time; he won't go through it again. Besides, he loathes grass widows, as Mrs. Browne calls them. Mr. Britt told him he'll be sure to love me more than ever as soon as I become a guileless divorcee. Of course, it's utter nonsense."

"A little nonsense now and then is—" began the Princess, and paused amiably.

"Is Mr. Chase to stay for lunch?" asked Lady Agnes irrelevantly.

"How should I know? I am not his hostess."

"Hoity-toity! I've never known you to look like that before. A little dash of red sets your cheeks off—" But Genevra threw up her hands in despair and started toward the stairway, her chin tilted high. Lady Agnes, laughing softly, followed. "It's too bad she's down to marry that horrid little Brabetz," she said to herself, with a sudden wistful glance at the proud, vibrant, loveable creature ahead. "She deserves a better fate than that."

Genevra waited for her at the head of the stairway.

"Agnes, I'd like you to promise that you will keep your avaricious claws off Mrs. Browne's husband," she said seriously.

"I'll try, my dear," said Lady Agnes meekly.

When they reached the garden, they found Deppingham smoking furiously and quite alone. Chase had left some time before, to give warning to the English bank that trouble might be expected. The shadow of disappointment that flitted across Genevra's face was not ob-

served by the others. Bobby Browne and his wife were off strolling in the lower end of the park.

"Poor old Deppy," cried his wife. "I've made up my mind to be exceedingly nice to you for a whole day."

"I suppose I ought to beat you," he said slowly.

"Beat me? Why, pray?"

"I received an anonymous letter this morning, telling me of your goings-on with Bobby Browne," said he easily. "It was stuck under my door by Bromley, who said that Miss Pelham gave it to her. Miss Pelham referred me to Mr. Britt and Mr. Britt urged me to keep the letter for future reference. I think he said it could be used as Exhibit A. Then he advised me to beat you only in the presence of witnesses."

"The whole household must be going mad," cried Genevra with a laugh.

"Oh, if something only would happen!" exclaimed her ladyship. "A riot, a massacre—anything! It all sounds like a farce to you, Genevra, but you haven't been here for five months, as we have."

As they moved away from the vine-covered nook in the garden, a hand parted the leaves in the balcony above and a dark, saturnine face appeared behind it. The two women would have felt extremely uncomfortable had they known that a supposedly trusted servant had followed them from the distant corridor, where he had heard every word of their conversation. This secret espionage had been going on for days in the château; scarcely a move was made or a word spoken by the white people that escaped the attention of a swarthy spy. And, curiously enough, these spies were no longer reporting their discoveries to Hollingsworth Chase.

The days passed. Hollingsworth Chase now realised that he no longer had authority over the natives; they suffered him to come and go, but gave no heed to his sug-

gestions. Rasula made the reports for the islanders and took charge of the statements from the bank.

Every morning he rode boldly into the town, transacted what business he could, talked with the thoroughly disturbed bankers, and then defiantly made his way to the château. He was in love with the Princess—desperately in love. He understood perfectly—for he was a man of the world and cosmopolitan—that nothing could come of it. She was a princess and she was not in a story book; she *could* not marry him. It was out of the question; of that he was thoroughly convinced, even in the beginning.

So far as Genevra was concerned, on her part it could mean no more than a diversion, a condescension to coquetry, a simple flirtation; it meant the passing of a few days, the killing of time, the pleasure of gentle conquest, and then—forgetfulness. All this he knew and reckoned with, for she was a princess and he but a plebeian passing by.

At first she revolted against the court he so plainly paid to her in these last few days; it was bold, conscienceless, impertinent. She avoided him; she treated him to a short season of disdain; she did all in her power to rebuke his effrontery—and then in the end she surrendered to the overpowering vanity which confronts all women who put the pride of caste against the pride of conquest.

She decided to give him as good as he sent in this brief battle of folly; it mattered little who came off with the fewest scars, for in a fortnight or two they would go their separate ways, no better, no worse for the conflict. And, after all, it was very dull in these last days, and he was very attractive, and very brave, and very gallant, and, above all, very sensible. It required three days of womanly indecision to bring her to this way of looking at the situation.

They rode together in the park every morning, keeping well out of range of marksmen in the hills. A sense of freedom replaced the natural reserve that had marked their first encounters in this little campaign of tenderness; they gave over being afraid of each other. He was too shrewd, too crafty to venture an open declaration; too much of a gentleman to force her hand ruthlessly. She understood and appreciated this considerateness. Their conflict was with the eyes, the tone of the voice, the intervals of silence; no touch of the hand—nothing, except the strategies of Eros.

What did it matter if a few dead impulses, a few crippled ideals, a few blasted hopes were left strewn upon the battlefield at the end of the fortnight? What mattered if there was grave danger of one or both of them receiving heart wounds that would cling to them all their lives? What did anything matter, so long as Prince Karl of Brabetz was not there?

One night toward the end of this week of enchanting rencontres—this week of effort to uncover the vulnerable spot in the other's armour—Genevra stood leaning upon the rail which enclosed the hanging garden. She was gazing abstractedly into the black night, out of which, far away, blinked the light in the bungalow. A dreamy languor lay upon her. She heard the cry of the night birds, the singing of woodland insects, but she was not aware of these persistent sounds; far below in the grassy court she could hear Britt conversing with Saunders and Miss Pelham; behind her in the little garden, Lady Deppingham and Browne had their heads close together over a table on which they were playing a newly discovered game of "solitaire"; Deppingham and Mrs. Browne leaned against the opposite railing, looking down into the valley. The soft night wind fanned her face, bringing to her nostrils the scent of the fragrant forest. It was

the first night in a week that he had missed coming to the château.

She missed him. She was lonely.

He had told her of the meeting that was to be held at the bungalow that night, at which he was to be asked to deliver over to Rasula's committee the papers, the receipts and the memoranda that he had accumulated during his months of employment in their behalf. She had a feeling of dread—a numb, sweet feeling that she could not explain, except that under all of it lay the proud consciousness that he was a man who had courage, a man who was not afraid.

"How silly I am," she said, half aloud in her abstraction.

She turned her gaze away from the blinking light in the hills, a queer, guilty smile on her lips. The wistful, shamed smile faded as she looked upon the couple who had given her so much trouble a week ago. She felt, with a hot flash of self-abasement, as if she was morally responsible for the consequences that seemed likely to attend Lady Deppingham's indiscretions.

Across the garden from where she was flaying herself bitterly, Lady Deppingham's husband was saying in low, agitated tones to Bobby Browne's wife, with occasional furtive glances at the two solitaire workers:

"Now, see here, Drusilla, I'm not saying that our—that is, Lady Deppingham and Bobby—are accountable for what has happened, but that doesn't make it any more pleasant! It's of little consequence *who* is trying to poison us, don't you know. And all that. *They* wouldn't do it, I'm sure, but *somebody* is! That's what I mean, d'ye see? Lady Dep——"

"I *know* my husband wouldn't—couldn't do such a thing, Lord Deppingham," came from Drusilla's stiff lips, almost as a moan. She was very miserable.

"Of course not, my dear Drusilla," he protested nervously. Then suddenly, as his eye caught what he considered a suspicious movement of Bobby's hand as he placed a card close to Lady Deppingham's fingers: "Demme, I—I'd rather he wouldn't—but I beg your pardon, Drusilla! It's all perfectly innocent."

"Of course, it's innocent!" whispered Drusilla fiercely.

"You know, my dear girl, I—I don't hate your husband. You may have a feeling that I do, but——"

"I suppose you think that I hate your wife. Well, I don't! I'm very fond of her."

"It's utter nonsense for us to suspect them of— Pray don't be so upset, Drusilla. It's all right——"

"If you think I am worrying over your wife's *harmless* affair with my husband, you are very much mistaken."

Deppingham was silent for a long time.

"I don't sleep at all these night," he said at last, miserably. She could not feel sorry for him. She could only feel for herself and *her* sleepless nights. "Drusilla, do —do you think they want to get rid of us? We're the obstacles, you know. We can't help it, but we are. Somebody put that pill in my tea to-day. It must have been a servant. It couldn't have been—er——"

"My husband, sir?"

"No; my wife. You know, Drusilla, she's not that sort. She has a horror of death and—" he stopped and wiped his brow pathetically.

"If the servants are trying to poison any of us, Lord Deppingham, it is reasonable to suspect that your wife and my husband are the ones they want to dispose of, not you and me. I don't believe it was poison you found in your tea. But if it was, it was intended for one of the heirs."

"Well, there's some consolation in that," said Deppy, smiling for the first time. "It's annoying, however, to

go about feeling all the time that one is likely to pass away because some stupid ass of an assassin makes a blunder in giving——"

The sharp rattle of firearms in the distance brought a sudden stop to his lugubrious reflections. Five, a dozen —a score of shots were heard. The blood turned cold in the veins of every one in the garden; faces blanched suddenly and all voices were hushed; a form of paralysis seized and held them for a full minute.

Then the voice of Britt below broke harshly upon the tense, still air: "Good God! Look! It is the bungalow!"

A bright glow lighted the dark mountain side, a vivid red painted the trees; the smell of burning wood came down with the breezes. Two or three sporadic shots were borne to the ears of those who looked toward the blazing bungalow.

"They've killed Chase!" burst from the stiff lips of Bobby Browne.

"Damn them!" came up from below in Britt's hoarse voice.

CHAPTER XIX

CHASE COMES FROM THE CLOUDS

For many minutes, the watchers in the château stared at the burning bungalow, fascinated, petrified. Through the mind of each man ran the sudden, sharp dread that Chase had met death at the hands of his enemies, and yet their stunned sensibilities refused at once to grasp the full horror of the tragedy.

Genevra felt her heart turn cold; then something seemed to clutch her by the throat and choke the breath out of her body. Through her brain went whirling the recollection of his last words to her that afternoon: "They'll find me ready if they come for trouble." She wondered if he had been ready for them or if they had surprised him! She had heard the shots. Chase could not have fired them all. He may have fired once—perhaps twice—that was all! The fusilade came from the guns of many, not one. Was he now lying dead in that blazing— She screamed aloud with the thought of it!

"Can't something be done?" she cried again and again, without taking her gaze from the doomed bungalow. She turned fiercely upon Bobby Browne, his countryman. Afterward she recalled that he stood staring as she had stared, Lady Deppingham clasping his arm with both of her hands. The glance also took in the face of Deppingham. He was looking at his wife and his eyes were wide and glassy, but not with terror. "It may not be too late," again cried the Princess. "There are enough of us here to make an effort, no matter how futile. He may be alive and trapped, up——"

"You're right," shouted Browne. "He's not the kind to go down with the first rush. We must go to him. We

can get there in ten minutes. Britt! Where are the guns? Are you with us, Deppingham?"

He did not wait for an answer, but dashed out of the garden and down the steps, calling to his wife to follow.

"Stop!" shouted Deppingham. "We dare not leave this place! If they have turned against Chase, they are also ready for us. I'm not a coward, Browne. We're needed here, that's all. Good God, man, don't you see what it means? It's to be a general massacre! We all are to go to-night. The servants may even now be waiting to cut us down. It's too late to help Chase. They've got him, poor devil! Everybody inside! Get to the guns if possible and cut off the servants' quarters. We must not let them surprise us. Follow me!"

There was wisdom in what he said, and Browne was not slow to see it clearly. With a single penetrating glance at Genevra's despairing face, he shook his head gloomily, and turned to follow Deppingham, who was hurrying off through the corridor with her ladyship.

"Come," he called, and the Princess, feeling Drusilla's hand grasping her arm, gave one helpless look at the fire and hastened to obey.

In the grand hallway, they came upon Britt and Saunders white-faced and excited. The white servants were clattering down the stairways, filled with alarm, but there was not one of the native attendants in sight. This was ominous enough in itself. As they huddled there for a moment, undecided which way to turn, the sound of a violent struggle in the lower corridor came to their ears. Loud voices, blows, a single shot, the rushing of feet, the panting of men in fierce combat—and then, even as the whites turned to retreat up the stairway, a crowd of men surged up the stairs from below, headed by Baillo, the major-domo.

"Stop, excellencies!" he shouted again and again.

Bobby Browne and Deppingham were covering the retreat, prepared to fight to the end for their women, although unarmed. It was the American who first realised that Baillo was not heading an attack upon them. He managed to convey this intelligence to the others and in a moment they were listening in wonder to the explanations of the major-domo.

Surprising as it may appear, the majority of the servants were faithful to their trust. Baillo and a score of his men had refused to join the stable men and gardeners in the plot to assassinate the white people. As a last resort, the conspirators contrived to steal into the château, hoping to fall upon their victims before Baillo could interpose. The major-domo, however, with the wily sagacity of his race, anticipated the move. The two forces met in the south hall, after the plotters had effected an entrance from the garden; the struggle was brief, for the conspirators were outnumbered and surprised. They were even now lying below, bound and helpless, awaiting the disposition of their intended victims.

"It is not because we love you, excellencies," explained Baillo, with a sudden fierce look in his eyes, "but because Allah has willed that we should serve you faithfully. We are your dogs. Therefore we fight for you. It is a vile dog which bites its master."

Browne, with the readiness of the average American, again assumed command of the situation. He gave instructions that the prisoners, seven in number, be confined in the dungeon, temporarily, at least. Bobby did not make the mistake of pouring gratitude upon the faithful servitors; it would have been as unwise as it was unwelcome. He simply issued commands; he was obeyed with the readiness that marks the soldier who dies for the cause he hates, but will not abandon.

"There will be no other attack on us to-night," said

Browne, rejoining the women after his interview with Baillo. "It has missed fire for the present, but they will try to get at us sooner or later from the outside. Britt, will you and Mr. Saunders put those prisoners through the 'sweat' box? You may be able to bluff something out of them, if you threaten them with death. They——"

"It won't do, Browne," said Deppingham, shaking his head. "They are fatalists, they are stoics. I know the breed better than you. Question if you like, but threats will be of no avail. Keep 'em locked up, that's all."

Firearms and ammunition were taken from the gun-room to the quarters occupied by the white people. Every preparation was made for a defence in the event of an attack from the outside or inside. Strict orders were given to every one. From this night on, the occupants of the château were to consider themselves in a state of siege, even though the enemy made no open display against them. Every precaution against surprise was taken. The white servants were moved into rooms adjoining their employers; Britt and Saunders transferred their belongings to certain gorgeous apartments; Miss Pelham went into a Marie Antoinette suite close by that of the Princess. The native servants retained their customary quarters, below stairs. It was a peculiar condition that all of the native servants were men; no women were employed in the great establishment, nor ever had been.

Far in the night, Genevra, sleepless and depressed, stole into the hanging garden. Her mind was full of the horrid thing that had happened to Hollingsworth Chase. He had been nothing to her—he could not have been anything to her had he escaped the guns of the assassins. And yet her heart was stunned by the stroke that it had sustained. Wide-eyed and sick, she made her way to the railing, and, clinging to the vines, stared for she knew

not how long at the dull red glow on the mountain. The flames were gone, but the last red tinge of their anger still clung to the spot where the bungalow had stood. Behind her, there were lights in a dozen rooms of the château. She knew that she was not the only sleepless one. Others were lying wide awake and tense, but for reasons scarcely akin to hers; they were appalled, not heartsick.

The night was still and ominously dark. She had never known a night since she came to Japat when the birds and insects were so mute. A sombre, supernatural calm hung over the island like a pall. Far off, over the black sea, pulsed the fitful glow of an occasional gleam of lightning, faint with the distance which it traversed. There was no moon; the stars were gone; the sky was inky and the air somnolent. The smell of smoke hung about her. She could not help wondering if his fine, strong body was lying up there, burnt to a crisp. It was far past midnight; she was alone in the garden. Sixty feet below her was the ground; above, the black dome of heaven.

She was not to know till long afterward that one of her faithful Thorberg men stood guard in the passage leading up from the garden, armed and willing to die. One or the other slept in front of her door through all those nights on the island.

Something hot trickled down her cheeks from the wide, pitying eyes that stared so hard. She was wondering now if he had a mother—sisters. How their hearts would be wrenched by this! A mute prayer that he might have died in the storm of bullets before the fire swept over him struggled against the hope that he might have escaped altogether. She was thinking of him with pity and horror in her heart, not love.

A question was beginning to form itself vaguely in her

troubled mind. Were all of them to die as Chase had died?

Suddenly there came to her ears the sound of something swishing through the air. An instant later, a solid object fell almost at her feet. She started back with a cry of alarm. A broad shaft of light crossed the garden, thrown by the lamps in the upper hall of the château. Her eyes fell upon a wriggling, snakelike thing that lay in this path of light.

Fascinated, almost paralysed, she watched it for a full minute before realising that it was the end of a thick rope, which lost itself in the heavy shadows at the cliff end of the garden. Looking about in terror, as if expecting to see murderous forms emerge from the shadows, she turned to flee. At the head of the steps which led downward into the corridor, she paused for a moment, glancing over her shoulder at the mysterious, wriggling thing. She was standing directly in the shaft of light. To her surprise, the wriggling ceased. The next moment, a faint, subdued shout was borne to her ears. Her flight was checked by that shout, for her startled, bewildered ears caught the sound of her own name. Again the shout, from where she knew not, except that it was distant; it seemed to come from the clouds.

At last, far above, she saw the glimmer of a light. It was too large to be a star, and it moved back and forth.

Sharply it dawned upon her that it was at the top of the cliff which overhung the garden and stretched away to the sea. Some one was up there waving a lantern. She was thinking hard and fast, a light breaking in upon her understanding. Something like joy shot into her being. Who else could it be if not Chase? He alone would call out her name! He was alive!

She called out his name shrilly, her face raised eagerly to the bobbing light. Not until hours afterward was

Genevra to resent the use of her Christian name by the man in the clouds.

In her agitation, she forgot to arouse the château, but undertook to ascertain the truth for herself. Rushing over, she grasped the knotted end of the rope. A glance and a single tug were sufficient to convince her that the other end was attached to a support at the top of the cliff. It hung limp and heavy, lifeless. A sharp tug from above caused it to tremble violently in her hands; she dropped it as if it were a serpent. There was something weird, uncanny in its presence, losing itself as it did in the darkness but a few feet above her head. Again she heard the shout, and this time she called out a question.

"Yes," was the answer, far above. "Can you hear me? Greatly excited, she called back that she could hear and understand. "I'm coming down the rope. Pray for us —but don't worry! Please go inside until we land in the garden. It's a long drop, you know."

"Are you quite sure—is it safe?" she called, shuddering at the thought of the perilous descent of nearly three hundred feet, sheer through the darkness.

"It's safer than stopping here. Please go inside."

She dully comprehended his meaning: he wanted to save her from seeing his fall in the event that the worst should come to pass. Scarcely knowing what she did, she moved over into the shadow near the walls and waited breathlessly, all the time wondering why some one did not come from the château to lend assistance.

At last that portion of the rope which lay in the garden began to jerk and writhe vigorously. She knew then that he was coming down, hand over hand, through that long, dangerous stretch of darkness. Elsewhere in this narrative, it has been stated that the cliff reared itself sheer to the height of three hundred and fifty feet directly be-

hind the château. At the summit of this great wall, a shelving ledge projected over the hanging garden; a rope dangling from this ledge would fall into the garden not far from the edge nearest the cliff. The summit of the cliff could be gained only by traversing the mountain slope from the other side; it was impossible to scale it from the floor of the valley which it bounded. A wide table-land extended back from the ledge for several hundred yards and then broke into the sharp, steep incline to the summit of the mountain. This table-land was covered by large, stout trees, thickly grown.

The rope was undoubtedly attached to the trunk of a sturdy tree at the brow of the cliff.

She could look no longer; it seemed hours since he started from the top. Every heart-beat brought him nearer to safety, but would he hold out? Any instant might bring him crashing to her feet—dead, after all that he may have lived through during that awful night.

At last she heard his heavy panting, groaning almost; the creaking and straining of the rope, the scraping of his hands and body. She opened her eyes and saw the bulky, swaying shadow not twenty feet above the garden. Slowly it drew nearer the grass-covered floor—foot by foot, straining, struggling, gasping in the final supreme effort—and then, with a sudden rush, the black mass collapsed and the taut rope sprung loose, the end switching and leaping violently.

Genevra rushed frantically across the garden, half-fearful, half-joyous. As she came up, the mass seemed to divide itself into two parts. One sank limply to the ground, the other stood erect for a second and then dropped beside the prostrate, gasping figure.

Chase had come down the rope with another human being clinging to his body!

Genevra fell to her knees beside the man who had accomplished this miracle. She gave but a passing glance at the other dark figure beside her. All of her interest was in the writhing, gasping American. She grasped his hands, warm and sticky with blood; she tried to lift his head from the ground, moaning with pity all the time, uttering words of encouragement in his ear.

Many minutes passed. At last Chase gave over gasping and began to breathe regularly but heavily. The strain had been tremendous; only superhuman strength and will had carried him through the ordeal. He groaned with pain as the two beside him lifted him to a sitting posture.

"Tell Selim to come ahead," he gasped, his bloody hand at his throat. "We're all right!"

Then, for the first time, Genevra peered in the darkness at the figure beside her. She stared in amazement as it sprang lightly erect and glided across to the patch of light. It was then that she recognised the figure of a woman—a slight, graceful woman in Oriental garb. The woman turned and lifted her face to the heights from which she had descended. In a shrill, eager voice she called out something in a language strange to the Princess, who knelt there and stared as if she were looking upon a being from another world. A faint shout came from on high, and once more the rope began to writhe.

The Princess passed her hand over her eyes, bewildered. The face of the woman in the light, half-shaded, half-illumined, was gloriously beautiful—young, dark, brilliant!

"Oh!" she exclaimed, starting to her feet, a look of understanding coming into her eyes. This was one of the Persians! He had saved her! A feeling of revulsion swept over her, combatting the first natural, womanly pride in the deed of a brave man.

Chase struggled weakly to his feet. He saw the tense, strained figure before him, and, putting out his hand, said:

"She is Selim's wife. I am stronger than he, so I brought her down." Then looking upward anxiously, he shouted:

"Be careful, Selim! It's easy if you take your time to it."

CHAPTER XX

NEENAH

"SELIM's wife, Neenah, saved my life." It was the next morning and Chase was relating his experiences to an eager marvelling company in the breakfast room. "She has a sister whose husband was one of the leaders in the attack. Neenah told Selim and Selim told me. That's all. We were prepared for them when they came last night. Days ago, Selim and I cached the rope at the top of the cliff, anticipating just such an emergency as this, and intending to use it if we could reach the château in no other way. I figured that they would cut off all other means of getting into your grounds.

"Neenah came up from the village ahead of the attacking party, out of breath and terribly frightened. We didn't waste a second, let me tell you. Grabbing up our guns, we got out through the rear and made a dash across the stable yard. It was near midnight. I had received the committee at nine and had given them my reasons for not resigning the post. They went away apparently satisfied, which aroused my suspicions. I knew that there was something behind that exhibition of meekness.

"The servants, all of whom were up and ready to join in the fight, attempted to head us off. We had a merry little touch of real warfare just back of the stables. It was as dark as pitch, and I don't believe we hit anybody. But it was lively scrambling for a minute or two, let me tell you." Chase shook his head in sober recollection of the preliminary affray.

Deppingham's big blue eyes were fairly snapping. His wife put her hand on his shoulder with an impulse strange to her and Genevra saw a light blaze in her eyes. "I

hope you potted a few of 'em. Serve 'em jolly well right if——"

"Selim says he stumbled over something that groaned as we were racing for the back road. I was looking out for Neenah." He glanced involuntarily from Lady Agnes to the Princess, a touch of confusion suddenly assailing him. "Selim covered the retreat," he added hastily. "Instead of keeping the road, we turned up the embankment and struck into the forest. Dropping down behind the bushes, we watched those devils from the town race pell-mell, howling and shooting, down the château road. There must have been a hundred of 'em. Five minutes later, the bungalow was afire. It was as bright as day and I had no trouble in recognising Rasula in the crowd. Selim led the way and I followed with Neenah. It was hard going, let me tell you, up hill and down, stumbles and tumbles, scratches and bumps, through five miles of the blackest night imaginable. Hang it all, Browne, I didn't have time to save that case of cigarettes; I'm out nearly a hundred boxes. And those novels you lent me, Lady Deppingham—I can't return. Sorry."

"You might have saved the cigarettes and novels if you hadn't been so occupied in saving the fair Neenah," said her ladyship, with a provoking smile.

"Alas! I thought of that also, but too late. Still, virtue was its own reward. Imagine my delight when we stopped to rest to have Neenah divide her own little store of Turkish cigarettes with me. We had a bully smoke up there in the wood."

"Selim, too?" asked Browne casually.

"Oh, no! Selim was exploring," said Chase easily.

"Neenah is very beautiful," ventured Lady Agnes.

"She is exquisite," replied Chase with the utmost *sang*

froid. "Selim bought her last winter for a ten karat ruby and a pint of sapphires."

"That explains her overwhelming love for Selim," said the Princess quietly. Chase looked into her eyes for a moment and smiled inwardly.

"I'll be happy to tell you all about her some other time," he said. "Her story is most interesting."

"That will be perfectly delightful," chimed in Drusilla. "We shan't miss those racy novels, after all."

"We finally got to the edge of the cliff and unearthed the rope, which we already had fastened to the trunk of a tree. It had been securely spliced in three places beforehand, giving us the proper length. It was a frightful trip we had over the ridge. Exhibit: the scratches upon my erstwhile beautiful countenance; reserved: the bruises upon my unhappy knees and elbows. I was obliged to carry Neenah for the last quarter of a mile, poor little girl. She was tied to my back, leaving my throat and chest free, and down we came. Simplest thing in the world. Presto! Here am I, with my happy family at my heels."

"Well, we can't sit here and dawdle all day," exclaimed Deppingham. "We must be moving about—arrange our batteries, and all that, don't you know. Get out a skirmish line, nominate our spies, bolster up our defences, set a watch, court-martial the prisoners, and look into the commissariat. We've got to stave these devils off for two or three weeks, at least, and we'll have to look sharp. Browne, that's the third cup of coffee you've had. Come along! This isn't Boston."

As they left the breakfast room, Chase stepped to Genevra's side and walked with her. They traversed the full length of the long hall in silence. At the foot of the stairs, where they were to part, she extended her hand, a bright smile in her eyes.

"You were and are very brave and good," she said. He withheld his hand and she dropped hers, hurt and strangely vexed. "Don't you care for my approval? Or do you——"

"You forget, Princess, that my hands are still suffering from the bravery you would laud," he said, holding them resolutely behind his back.

"Oh, I remember!" she cried in quick comprehension. "They were cut and bruised by the rope. How thoughtless of me. What are you doing for them? Come, Mr. Chase, may I not dress them for you? I am capable—I am not afraid of wounds. We have had many of them in our family—and fatal ones too." She was eager now, and earnest.

He shook his head, with a smile on his lips. "I thank you. They are better—much better, and they have been quite properly bandaged already."

"Neenah?"

"Yes," he replied gently. She seemed to search his mind with a quick, intense look into his eyes. Then she smiled and said: "I'll promise not to bruise the wounds if you'll only be so good as to shake hands with me."

He took her slender hand in his broad, white-swathed palm and pressed it fervently, regardless of the pain which would have caused him to cringe if engaged in any other pursuit.

The forenoon was fully occupied with the preparations for defence. Every precaution was taken to circumvent the plans of the enemy. There was no longer any doubt as to the intentions of the disappointed islanders. Von Blitz and Rasula had convinced them that their cause was seriously jeopardised; they were made to see the necessity for permanently removing the white pretenders from their path.

Deppingham, on account of his one time position in

the British army, was chosen chief officer of the beleaguered "citadel." A strict espionage was set upon the native servants, despite Baillo's assurances of loyalty. Lookouts were posted in the towers and a ceaseless watch was to be kept day and night. Chase, on his first visit to the west tower, discovered a long unused searchlight of powerful dimensions. Fortunately for the besieged, the electric-light plant was located in the château grounds and could not be tampered with from the outside. A quantity of fuel, sufficient to last for a couple of months, was found in the bins.

Britt was put in charge of the night patrol, Saunders the day. Strict orders were given that no one was to venture into that portion of the park open to long-range shots from the hills. Chase set the minds of all at rest by announcing that the islanders would not seek to set fire to the château from the cliffs: such avaricious gentlemen as Von Blitz and Rasula would never consent to the destruction of property so valuable. Selim, under orders, had severed the long rope with a single rifle shot; no one could hope to reach the château by way of the cliff.

Extra precautions were taken to guard the women from attacks from the inside. The window bars were locked securely and heavy bolts were placed on the doors leading to the lower regions. It was now only too apparent that Skaggs and Wyckholme had wrought well in anticipation of a rebellion by the native shareholders. Each window had its adjustable grates, every outer door was protected by heavy iron gates.

By nightfall Deppingham's forces were in full possession of every advantage that their position afforded. In the cool of the evening, they sat down to rest in the great stone gallery overlooking the sea, satisfied that they were reasonably secure from any assault that their foes might undertake. No sign of hostility had been observed dur-

ing the day. Japat looked, as observed from the château, to be the most peaceful spot in the world.

Chase came from his room, still stiff and sore, but with fresh, white bandages on his blistered hands. He asked and received permission to light a cigarette, and then dropped wearily into a seat near the Princess, who sat upon the stone railing. She was leaning back against the column and looking dreamily out across the lowlands toward the starlit sea. The never-ceasing rush of the mountain stream came plainly up to them from below; now and then a cool dash of spray floated to their faces from the waterfall hard by.

The soft light from the shaded windows fell upon her glorious face. Chase sat in silence for many minutes, covertly feasting his eyes upon her loveliness. Her trim, graceful, seductive figure was outlined against the darkness; a delicate, sensuous fragrance exhaled from her person, filling him with an indescribable delight and languor; the spell of her beauty was upon him and he felt the leap of his blood.

"If I were you," he said at last, reluctant to despoil the picture, "I wouldn't sit up there. It would be a very simple matter for one of our friends to pick you off with a shot from below. Please let me pull up a chair for you."

She smiled languidly, without a trace of uneasiness in her manner.

"Dear officer of the day, do you think they are so foolish as to pick us off in particles? Not at all. They will dispose of us wholesale, not by the piece. By the way, has Neenah been made quite comfortable?"

"I believe so. She and Selim have the room beyond mine, thanks to Lady Deppingham."

"Agnes tells me that she is very interesting—quite like a princess out of a fairy book. You recall the princesses

who were always being captured by ogres and evil princes and afterward satisfactorily rescued by those dear knights admirable? Did Selim steal her in the beginning?"

"You forget the pot of sapphires and the big ruby."

"They say that princesses can be bought very cheaply."

"Depends entirely upon the quality of princess you desire. It's very much like buying rare gems or old paintings, I'd say."

"Very much, I'm sure. I suppose you'd call Neenah a rare gem?"

"She is certainly not an old painting."

"How old is she, pray?"

"Seventeen—by no means an antique. Speaking of princesses and ogres, has it occurred to you that you would bring a fortune in the market?"

"Mr. Chase!"

"You know, it's barely possible that you may be put in a matrimonial shop window if Von Blitz and his friends should capture you alive. Ever think of that?"

"Good heavens! You—why, what a horrible thing to say!"

"You won't bring as much in the South Sea market as you would in Rapp-Thorberg or Paris, but I daresay you could be sold for——"

"Please, Mr. Chase, don't suggest anything so atrocious," she cried, something like terror in her voice.

"Neenah's father sold her for a handful of gems," said he, with distinct meaning in his voice. She was silent, and he went on after a moment. "Is there so much difference, after all, where one is sold, just so long as the price is satisfactory to all concerned?"

"You are very unkind, Mr. Chase," she said with quiet dignity. "I do not deserve your sarcasm."

"I humbly plead for forgiveness," he said, suddenly contrite. "It was beastly."

"American wit, I imagine you call it," she said scornfully. "I don't care to talk with you any longer."

"Won't you forgive me? I'm a poor brute—don't lash me. In two or three weeks I'll step down and out of your life; that will be penalty enough, don't you think?"

"For whom?" she asked in a voice so low that he could scarcely hear the words. Then she laughed ironically. "I *do* forgive. It is all that a prince or a princess is ever asked to do, I'm beginning to believe. I also forgive you for coming into my life."

"If I had been a trifle more intelligent, I should not have come into it at all," he said. She turned upon him quickly, stung by the remark.

"Is that the way you feel about it?" she asked sharply.

"You don't understand. A man of intelligence would never have kicked Prince Karl. As a matter of fact, in trying to kick Prince Karl out of your life, I kicked myself into it. A very simple process, and yet scarcely intellectual. A jackass could have done as much."

"A jackass may kick at a king," she paraphrased casually. "A cat may only look at him. But let us go back to realities. Do you mean to tell me that they—these wretches—would dare to sell me—us, I mean—into the kind of slavery you mention?" A trace of anxiety deepened the tone of her voice. She was now keenly alert and no longer trivial.

"Why not?" he asked soberly, arising and coming quite close to her side. "You are beautiful. If they should take you alive, it would be a very simple matter for any one of these men to purchase you from the others. You might easily be kept on this island for the rest of your days, and the world would be none the wiser. Or you could be sold into Persia, or Arabia, or Turkey. I am

not surprised that you shudder. Forgive me for alarming you, perhaps needlessly. Nevertheless, it is a thing to consider. I have learned all of the plans from Selim's wife. They do not contemplate the connubial traffic, 'tis true, but that would be a natural consequence. Von Blitz and Rasula mean to destroy all of us. We are to disappear from the face of the earth. When our friends come to look for us, we will have died from the plague and our bodies will have been burned, as they always are in Japat. There will be no one left to deny the story. All outsiders are to be destroyed—even the Persian and Turkish women, who hate their liege lords too well. After to-morrow, no ship is due to put in here for three weeks. They will see to it that none of us get out to that ship; nor will the ship's officers know of our peril. The word will go forth that the plague has come to the island. That is the first step, your highness. But there is one obstacle they have overlooked," he concluded. She looked up inquiringly.

"My warships," he said, the whimsical smile broadening.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PLAGUE IS ANNOUNCED

THE next morning, a steamship flying the English flag came to anchor off Aratat, delivered and received mail bags, and after an hour's stay steamed away in the drift of the southeast trade winds, Bombay to Cape Colony. The men at the château gazed longingly, helplessly through their glasses at this black hulled visitor from the world they loved; they watched it until nothing was left to be seen except the faint cloud of smoke that went to a pin point in the horizon. There had been absolutely no opportunity to communicate with the officers of the ship; they sailed away hurriedly, as if in alarm. Their haste was significant.

"I guess we'd better not tell the women," said Bobby Browne, heaving a deep sigh. "It won't add to their cheerfulness if they hear that a ship has called here."

"It couldn't matter in any event," said Deppingham. "We've got to stick here two weeks longer, no matter how many ships call. I'm demmed if I'll funk now, after all these rotten months."

"Perhaps Bowles succeeded in getting a word with the officer who came ashore," said Browne hopefully. "He knows the danger we are in."

"My dear Browne, Bowles hadn't the ghost of a chance to communicate with the ship," said Chase. "He can't bully 'em any longer with his Tommy Atkins coat. They've outgrown it, just as he has. It was splendid while it lasted, but they're no more afraid of it now than they are of my warships. I wish there was some way to get him and his English assistants into the château. It's

awful to think of what is coming to them, sooner or later."

"Good God, Chase, is there no way to help them?" groaned Deppingham.

"I'll never forget poor Bowles, the first time I saw him in his dinky red jacket and that Hooligan cap of his," reflected Chase, as if he had not heard Deppingham's remark. "He put them on and tried to overawe the crowd that night when I was threatened in the market-place. He did his best, poor chap, and I——"

"Look!" exclaimed Britt suddenly, pointing toward one of the big gates in the upper end of the park. "I believe they're making an attack!"

The next instant the men in the balcony were leaving it pell-mell, picking up the ever-ready rifles as they dashed off through the halls and out into the park. What they had seen at the gate—which was one rarely used—was sufficient to demand immediate action on their part; a demonstration of some sort was in progress at this particular entrance to the grounds. Saunders was left behind with instructions to guard the château against assault from other sources. Headed by Chase, the four men hurried across the park, prepared for an encounter at the gate. They kept themselves as well covered as possible by the boxed trees, although up to this time there had been no shooting.

Chase, in advance, suddenly gave vent to a loud cry and boldly dashed out into the open, disregarding all shelter. Two of the native park patrol were hastening toward the gate from another direction. Outside the huge, barred gate a throng of men and women were congregated. Some of the men were vigorously slashing away at the bars with sledges and crow-bars; others were crouching with rifles levelled—in the other direction!

"It's Bowles!" shouted Chase eagerly.

The situation at once became clear to those inside the walls. Bowles and his friends, a score all told, had managed to reach the upper gate and were now clamouring for admission, beset on all sides by the pickets who were watching the château. Bowles, with his pathetic red jacket, could be distinguished in the midst of his huddled followers, shouting frantically for haste on the part of those inside. Some one was waving a white flag of truce. A couple of shots were fired from the forest above, and there were screams from the frightened women, shouts from the men, who had ceased battering the gates at the signs of rescue from within.

"For God's sake, be quick," shouted Bowles. "There's a thousand of them coming up the mines' road!"

The gates were unlocked by the patrol and the panic-stricken throng tumbled through them and scattered like sheep behind the high, sheltering walls. Once more the massive gates were closed and the bolts thrown down, just in time to avoid a fusillade of bullets from the outside. It was all over in a minute. A hundred throats emitted shouts of rage, curses and threats, and then, as if by magic, the forest became as still as death.

Once inside the château, the fugitives, shivering with terror, fairly collapsed. There were three Englishmen in the party besides Bowles, scrubby, sickly chaps, but men after all. It was with unfeigned surprise that Chase recognised the Persian wives of Jacob von Blitz among the women who had been obliged to cast their lot with the refugees from Aratat. The sister of Neenah and five or six other women who had been sold into the island made up the remainder of the little group of trembling females. Their faces were veiled; their persons were bedecked with all of the gaudy raiment and jewels that their charms had won from their liege lords. They were slaves, these Persians and Turks and Egyptians, but they came out of

bondage with the trophies of queens stuck in their hair, in their ears, on their hands and arms and about their waists and throats.

The remainder of the men in the party, fourteen or fifteen in all, were of many castes and nationalities, and of various ages. There were brown-skinned fellows from Calcutta, a couple of sturdy Greeks, an Egyptian and a Persian, three or four Assyrians and as many Maori. As to their walks in life: among them were clerks and guards from the bank, members of the native constabulary, Indian fakirs and showmen, and venders of foreign gewgaws.

Bowles, his thin legs still shaking perceptibly, although he strove mightily to hold them at strict "attention," was the spokesman. A valiant heart thumped once more against the seams of the little red jacket; if his hand trembled and his voice shook, it was because of the unwonted exertion to which both had been put in that stirring flight at dawn. He had eager, anxious listeners about him, too—and of the nobility. Small wonder that his knees were intractable.

"For some time we have been preparing for the outbreak," he said, fingering the glass of brandy that Britt had poured for him. "Ever since Chase began to go in so noticeably for the ladies—ahem!"

Chase glared at him. The others tittered.

"I don't mean the old story, sir, of the Persians—and I'm saying, sir, what's more, there wasn't a word of truth in it—I mean the ladies of the château, begging pardon, too. Von Blitz came to me often with complaints that you were being made a fool of by a pretty face or two, and that you were going over to the enemy, body and soul. Of course, I stood out for you, sir. It wasn't any use. They'd made up their minds to get rid of you. When I heard that they tried to kill you the night before

last, I made up my mind that no white man was to be left to tell the tale. Last night we locked all the company's books in the vaults, got together all the banknotes and gold we had on hand, and made preparations to go on board the steamer when she called this morning. My plan was to tell them of the trouble here and try to save you. We were all expected to die of the plague, that's what we were, and I realised that Tommy Atkins was off the boards forever.

"We hadn't any more than got the cash and valuables ready to smuggle aboard, when down came Rasula upon us. Ten o'clock last night, your lordship. That's what it was—ten P. M. He had a dozen men with him and he told every mother's son of us that our presence in the town was not desired until after the ship had sailed away. We were ordered to leave the town and go up into the hills under guard. There wasn't any chance to fight or argue. We said we'd go, but we'd have the government on them for the outrage. We left the rooms in the bank building, carrying away what money we could well conceal. Later we were joined by the other men you found with us, all of whom had refused to join in the outrage.

"We were taken up into the hills by a squad of men. There wasn't a man among us that didn't know that we were to be killed as soon as the ship had gone. With our own eyes, we saw the mail bags rifled, and nearly all of the mail destroyed. The pouches from the château were burned. Rasula politely informed us that the plague had broken out among the château servants and that no mail could be sent out from that place. He said he intended to warn the ship's officer of the danger in landing and—well, that explains the short stay of the ship and the absence of nearly all mail from the island. We had no means of communicating with the officers. There won't be another boat for three weeks, and they won't

land because of the plague. They will get word, however, that every one in the château has died of the disease, and that scores of natives are dying every day.

"Well, we decided to break away from the guard and try to get to the château. It was our only chance. It was their intention to take some of us back to the bank this morning to open the vault and the safes. That was to be our last act, I fancy. I think it was about four this morning when a dozen of the women came up to where we were being held. They were flying from the town and ran into the arms of our guard before they knew of their presence. It seems that those devils down there had set out to kill their women because it was known that one of them had warned Mr. Chase of his danger. According to the women who came with us, at least a score of these unlucky wives were strangled. Von Blitz's wives succeeded in getting word to a few of their friends and they fled.

"During the excitement brought about by their arrival in our camp, we made a sudden attack upon our guards. They were not expecting it and we had seized their rifles before they could recover from their surprise. I regret to say that we were obliged to kill a few of them in the row that followed. But that is neither here nor there. We struck off for the lower park as lively as possible. The sun was well up, and we had no time to lose. We found the gates barred and went on to the upper gates. You let us in just in time. The alarm had gone back to the town and we could see the mob coming up the mines' road. My word, it was a close shave."

He mopped his brow with trembling hand and smiled feebly at his countrymen for support. The colour was coming back into their faces and they could smile with the usual British indifference.

"A very close shave, my crimes!" vouchsafed the stumpy gentleman who kept the books at the bank.

"It's an ill wind that blows all evil," said Deppingham. "Mr. Bowles, you are most welcome. We were a bit short of able-bodied soldiers. May we count on you and the men who came with you?"

"To the end, my lord," said Bowles, almost bursting his jacket by inflation. The others slapped their legs staunchly.

"Then, we'll all have breakfast," announced Lord Deppingham. "Mr. Saunders, will you be good enough to conduct the recruits to quarters?"

The arrival of the refugees from Aratat gave the château a staunch little garrison, not counting the servants, whose loyalty was an uncertain quantity. The stable men in the dungeon below served as illustrations of what might be expected of the others, despite their profession of fidelity. Including the house servants, who, perforce, were loyal, there was an able-bodied garrison of sixty men. After luncheon, Deppingham called his forces together. He gave fresh instructions, exacted staunch promises, and heard reports from all of his aides. The château by this time had been made practically impregnable to attack from the outside.

"For the time being we are as snug as bugs in a rug," said Deppingham, when all was over. "Shall we rejoin the ladies, gentlemen?" He was as calm as a May morning.

The three leaders found the ladies in the shaded balcony, lounging lazily as if no such thing as danger existed. Below them in the grassy courtyard, a dozen indolent, sensuous Persians were congregated, lying about in the shade with all the abandon of absolute security. The three women in the balcony had been watching them for an hour, commenting freely upon these creatures from

another world. Neenah, the youngest and prettiest of them all, had wafted kisses to the proud dames above. She had danced for their amusement. Her companions sat staring at the ladies at the railing, dark eyes peering with disdain above the veils which hid their faces.

Lady Agnes waved her hand lazily toward the group below, sending a mocking smile to Chase. "The Asiatic plague," she said cheerfully.

"The deuce," broke in her husband, not catching her meaning. "Has it really broken out——"

"Deppy, you are the dumbest creature I know," exclaimed his wife.

Chase smiled broadly. "She refers to the newly acquired harem, Lord Deppingham. We're supposed to die with the Asiatic plague, not to—not to——"

"Not to live with it! Ho, ho, I see, by Jove!" roared Deppingham amiably. "Splendid! Harem! I get the point. Ripping!"

"They're not so bad, are they, Bobby?" asked Lady Agnes coolly, going to Browne's side at the railing. Chase hesitated a moment and then walked over to Drusilla Browne, who was looking pensively into the courtyard below. He was sorry for her. She laughed and chatted with him for ten minutes, but there was a strained note in her voice that did not escape his notice. It may not have been true that Browne was in love with Lady Deppingham, but it was more than evident that his wife felt convinced that he was.

"Splendid!" was the sudden exclamation of Drusilla's vagrant lord. The others looked up, interested. "Say, everybody, Lady Agnes and I have hit upon a ripping scheme. It's great!"

"To better our position?" asked Deppingham.

"Position? What—oh, I see. Not exactly. What do

you say to a charity ball, the proceeds to go to the survivors of the plague we're expected to have?"

The Princess gave a quick, involuntary look at Chase's face. Browne's tall fellow-countryman was now leaning against the rail beside her chair. She saw a look of surprised amusement flit across his face, succeeded almost instantly by a hard, dark frown of displeasure. He waited a moment and then looked down at her with unmistakable shame and disapproval in his eyes. Bobby Browne was going on volubly about the charity ball, Deppingham listening with a fair show of tolerance.

"We might just as well be merry while we can," he was saying. "Think of what the French did at the time of the Commune. They danced and died like ladies and gentlemen. And our own forefathers, Chase, at the time of the American Revolution—remember them, too. They gave their balls and parties right under the muzzles of British cannon. And Vicksburg—New Orleans, too—in the Civil War! Think of 'em! Why shouldn't we be as game and as gay as they?"

"But they were earnest in their distractions," observed Deppingham, with a glance at his wife's eager face. "This could be nothing more than a travesty, a jest."

"Oh, let us be sports," cried Lady Agnes, falling into an Americanism readily. "It may be a jest, but what odds? Something to kill time with."

Chase and the Princess watched Deppingham's expressionless face as he listened to his wife and Bobby Browne. They were talking of arrangements. He looked out over the roof of the opposite wing, beyond the group of Persians, and nodded his head from time to time. There was no smile on his lips, however.

"I don't like Mr. Browne," whispered Genevra suddenly. Chase did not reply. She waited a moment and then went on. "He is not like Deppingham. Do you understand?"

Lady Deppingham came over to them at that instant, her eyes sparkling.

"It's to be to-night," she said. "A fashionable charity ball—everything except the newspaper accounts, don't you know. Committees and all that. It's short notice, of course, but life may be short. We'll have Arab acrobatics, Persian dances, a grand march, electric lights and absolutely no money to distribute. That's the way it usually is. Now, Mr. Chase, don't look so sour! Be nice, please!" She put her hand on his arm and smiled up at him so brightly that he could not hold out against her. She caught the touch of disapproval in Genevra's glance, and a sharp, quick flash of rebellion came into her own eyes—a stubborn line stopped for an instant at the corners of her mouth.

"What is a charity ball?" asked Genevra after a moment.

"A charity ball is a function where one set of women sit in the boxes and say nasty things about the women on the floor, and those on the floor say horrid things about the women in the boxes. It's great fun."

"Charity is simply a hallucination, then?"

"Yes, but don't mention it aloud. Mr. Britt is trying with might and main to prove that Bobby and I have hallucinations without end. If I happen to look depressed at breakfast time, he jots it down—spells of depression and melancholia, do you see? He's a dreadful man."

Saunders was approaching from the lower end of the balcony. He appeared flustered. His face was red and perspiring and his manner distrait. Saunders, since his failure to establish the advantages of polygamy, had shrunk farther into the background than ever, quite unlike Britt, who had not lost confidence in the divorce laws. The sandy-haired solicitor was now exhibiting symptoms of unusual discomfiture.

"Well, Saunders?" said Deppingham, as the lawyer stopped to clear his throat obsequiously.

"I have found sufficient food of all descriptions, sir, to last for a month, at least," said Saunders, in a strained, unnatural voice.

"Good! Has Miss Pelham jilted you, Saunders?" He put the question in a jocular way. Its effect on Saunders was startling. His face turned almost purple with confusion.

"No, sir, she has not, sir," he stammered.

"Beg pardon, Saunders. I didn't mean to offend. Where is she, pray, with the invoice?"

"I'm—I'm sure I don't know, sir," responded Saunders, striving to regain his dignity.

"Have a cigarette, Deppy?" interposed Browne, seeing that something was amiss with Saunders. In solemn order the silver box went the rounds. Drusilla alone refused to take one. Her husband looked surprised.

"Want one, Drusie?"

"No, thank you, Bobby," she said succinctly. "I've stopped. I don't think it's womanly."

Lady Deppingham's hand was arrested with the match half way to her lips. She looked hard at Drusilla for a moment and then touched the light serenely to her cigarette.

"Pooh!" was all that she said. Genevra did not light hers at all.

Saunders spoke up, as if suddenly recollecting something. "I have also to report, sir, that the stock of cigarettes is getting very low. They can't last three days at this rate, sir."

The three men stared at him.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Chase, who could face any peril and relish the experience if needs be, but who now

foresaw a sickening deprivation. "You can't mean it, Saunders?"

"I certainly do, sir. The mint is holding out well, though, sir. I think it will last."

"By George, this is a calamity," groaned Chase. "How is a man to fight without cigarettes?"

Genevra quietly proffered the one she had not lighted, a quizzical smile in her eyes.

"My contribution to the cause," she said gaily. "What strange creatures men are! You will go out and be shot at all day and yet—" she paused and looked at the cigarette as if it were entitled to reverence.

"It does seem a bit silly, doesn't it?" lamented the stalwart Chase. Then he took the cigarette.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CHARITY BALL

THEY were not long in finding out what had happened to Saunders. After luncheon, while Browne and the three ladies were completing the preparations for the entertainment, Miss Pelham appeared before Deppingham and Chase in the former's headquarters. She had asked for an interview and was accompanied by Mr. Britt.

"Lord Deppingham," she began, seating herself coolly before the two men, her eyes dark with decision, "I approach you as the recognised head of this establishment. I shan't detain you long. My attorney, Mr. Britt, will explain matters to you after I have retired. He——"

"Your attorney? What does this mean?" gasped Deppingham, visions of blackmail in mind. "What's up, Britt? I deny every demmed word of it, whatever it is!"

"Just a little private affair," murmured Britt, uncomfortably.

"Private?" sniffed Miss Pelham, involuntarily rearranging her hat. "I think it has been quite public, Mr. Britt. That's the trouble." Lord Deppingham looked worried and Chase had the feeling that some wretched disclosure was about to be made by the sharp-tongued young woman. He looked at her with a hard light in his eyes. She caught the glance and stared back for a moment defiantly. Then she appeared to remember that she always had longed for his good opinion—perhaps, she had dreamed of something more—and her eyes fell; he saw her lip tremble. "I've simply come to ask Lord Deppingham to stand by me. Mr. Saunders is in his employ—or Lady Deppingham's, I should say——"

"Which is the same thing," interposed Deppingham, drawing a deeper breath. He had been trying to recollect if he ever had said anything to Miss Pelham that might not appear well if repeated.

"Mr. Saunders has deceived me," she announced steadily. "I leave it to you if his attentions have not been most pronounced. Of course, if I wanted to, I could show you a transcript of everything he has said to me in the last couple of months. He didn't know it, but I managed to get most everything down in shorthand. I did it at the risk, too, your lordship, of being considered cold and unresponsive by him. It's most difficult to take conversation without the free use of your hands, I must say. But I've preserved in my own black and white, every promise he made and——"

"I'm afraid it won't be good evidence," volunteered her lawyer. "It will have to be substantiated, my dear."

"Please don't call me 'my dear,' Mr. Britt. Never you mind about it not being good evidence. Thomas Saunders won't enjoy hearing it read in court, just the same. What I want to ask of you, Lord Deppingham, as a friend, is to give Mr. Britt your deposition regarding Mr. Saunders's attitude toward me, to the best of your knowledge and belief. I'll take it verbatim and put it into typewriting, free of charge. I—I don't see anything to laugh at, Mr. Chase!" she cried, flushing painfully.

"My dear girl," he said, controlling himself, "I think you are misjudging the magnitude of a lover's quarrel. Don't you think it is rather a poor time to talk breach of promise with the guns of an enemy ready to take a pop at us at any moment?"

"It's no worse than a charity ball, Mr. Chase," she said severely. "Charity begins at home, gentlemen, and I'm here to look out for myself. No one else will, let

me tell you that. I want to get the deposition of every person in the château. They can be sworn to before Mr. Bowles, who is a magistrate, I'm told. He can marry people and——"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Deppingham suddenly. "Can he? Upon my soul!"

"His manner changed as soon as that horrid little wife of Selim came to the château. I don't like the way she makes eyes at him and I told him so this morning, down in the storerooms. My, but he flew up! He said he'd be damned if he'd marry me." She began to use her handkerchief vigorously. The men smiled as they looked away.

"I—I intend to sue him for breach of promise," she said thickly.

"Is it as bad as all that?" asked Deppingham consolingly.

"What do you mean by 'bad as all that'? He's kissed me time and again, but that's all."

"I'll send for Saunders," said Deppingham sternly.

"Not while I'm here," she exclaimed, getting up nervously.

"Just as you like, Miss Pelham. I'll send for you after we've talked it over with Saunders. We can't afford a scandal in the château, don't you know."

"No, I should think not," she said pointedly. Then she looked at Chase and winked, with a meaning nod at the unobserving Deppingham. Chase followed her into the hall.

"None of that, Miss Pelham," he said severely.

Saunders came in a few minutes later, nervous and uncomfortable.

"You sent for me, my lord," he said weakly.

"Sit down, Saunders. Your knees seem to be troubling

you. Miss Pelham is going to sue you for breach of promise."

"Good Lord!"

"What have you promised her, sir?"

"That I *wouldn't* marry her, that's all, sir," floundered Saunders. "She's got no right to presume, sir. Gentlemen always indulge in little affairs—flirtations, I might say, sir—it's most common. Of course, I thought she'd understand."

"Don't you love her, Saunders?"

"Oh, I say, my lord, that's rather a pointed question. My word, it is, sir! There may have been a bit of—er—well, you know—between us, sir, but—that's all, that's quite all. Absurdly all, 'pon my soul."

"Saunders," said Britt solemnly, "I am her attorney. Be careful what you say in my presence."

"Britt," said Saunders distinctly, "you are a blooming traitor! You told me yourself that she was used to all that sort of thing and wouldn't mind. Now, see what you do? It's—it's outrageous!" He was half in tears. Then turning to Deppingham, he went on fiercely, "I won't be bullyragged by any woman, sir. We got along beautifully until she began to shy figurative pots at me because Selim's wife looked at me occasionally. Hang it all, sir, I can't help it if the ladies choose to look at me. Minnie—Miss Pelham—was perfectly silly about it. Good Lord," he groaned in recollection. "It was a very trying scene she made, sir. More than ever, it made me realise that I can't marry beneath me. You see, my lord, we've got a fairish sort of social position out Hammersmith way—as far out as Putney, I might say, where we have rather swell friends, my mother and I—and I don't think——"

"Saunders," said Lord Deppingham sternly, "she loves you. I don't understand why or how, but she does. Just

because you have obtained an exalted social position at Hammersmith Bridge is no reason you should become a snob. I daresay she stands just as well at Brooklyn Bridge as you do at Hammersmith. She's a fine girl and would be an adornment to you, such as Hammersmith could be proud of. If you want my candid opinion, Saunders, I think you're a silly ass!"

"Do you really, my lord?" quite humbly.

"Shall I prove it to you by every man on the place? Miss Pelham is quite good enough for any one of us. I'd be proud to have her as my wife—if I lived at Hammersmith Bridge."

"You amaze me, sir!"

"She's a very pretty girl," volunteered Chase glibly.

"Oh, she could marry like a flash in New York," said Britt. "A dozen men I know of are crazy about her. Good-looking chaps, too." The sarcasm escaped Saunders, who was fidgeting uncomfortably.

"Of course—you know—the breaking of the engagement—I should say the row, wasn't of my doing," he submitted, pulling at his finger joints nervously.

"I'm afraid it can't be patched up, either," said Britt dolefully. "She's been insulted, you see——"

"Insulted? My eye! I wouldn't say anything to hurt her for the world. I may have been agitated—very likely I said a sharp word or two. But as for insulting her—never! She's told me herself a thousand times that she doesn't mind the word 'damn' in the least. That may have misled me——"

"Saunders, we can't have our only romance marred by a breach of promise suit," said his lordship resolutely. "There is simply got to be a wedding in the end or the whole world will hate us. Every romance must have its young lovers, and even though it doesn't run smooth, love will triumph. So far you have been our prize young

lover. You are the undisputed hero. Don't spoil everything at the last moment, Saunders. Patch it up, and let's have a wedding in the last chapter. You should not forget that it was you who advocated multi-marriage. Try it once for yourself, and, if you like it, by Jove, we'll all come to your succeeding marriages and bless you, no matter how many wives you take unto yourself."

Saunders, very much impressed by these confidences, bowed himself out of the room, followed by Britt, of whom he implored help in the effort to bring about a reconciliation. He was sorely distressed by Britt's apparent reluctance to compromise the case without mature deliberation.

"You see, old chap," mused Deppingham, after their departure, "matrimony is no trifling thing, after all. No matter whether it contemplates a garden in Hammersmith or an island in the South Seas, it has its drawbacks."

The charity ball began at ten o'clock, schedule time. If all of those who participated were not in perfect sympathy with the spirit of the mad whim, they at least did not deport themselves after the fashion of wet blankets. To be quite authentic, but two of the promoters were heartily involved in the travesty—Lady Agnes, whose sprightliness was never dormant, and Bobby Browne, who shone in the glamour of his first encounter with the nobility. Drusilla Browne, asserting herself as an American matron, insisted that the invitation list should include the lowly as well as the mighty. She had her way, and as a result, the bank employés, the French maids, Antoine and the two corporals of Rapp-Thorberg's Royal Guard appeared on the floor in the grand march directly behind Mr. Britt, Mr. Saunders, and Miss Pelham.

"One cannot discriminate at the charity ball,"

Drusilla had stoutly maintained. "The *hoi polloi* and the riff-raff always get in at home. So, why not here? If we're going to have a charity ball, let's give it the correct atmosphere."

"I shall feel as if I were dancing with my green grocer," lamented Lady Agnes. Later on, when the dancing was at its height, she exclaimed with all the fervour of a charmed imagination: "I feel as the Duchess de What's-her-name must have felt, Bobby, when she danced all night at her own ball, and then dressed for the guillotine instead of going to bed. We may all be shot in the morning."

The Indian fakirs and showmen gave a performance in the courtyard at midnight. They were followed by the Bedouin tumblers and the inspired Persians, who danced with frantic abandon and the ripe lust of joy. There was but one unfortunate accident. Mr. Rivers, formerly of the bank, got very tight and fell down the steps leading to the courtyard, breaking his left arm.

Lord Deppingham and Chase kept their heads. They saw to it that the watch over the grounds and about the château was strictly maintained. The former led the grand march with the Princess. She was more ravishingly beautiful than ever. Her gown, exquisitely cool and simple, suggested that indefinable, unmistakable touch of class that always marks the distinction between the woman who subdues the gown and the gown which subdues the woman.

Hollingsworth Chase was dazzled. He discovered, much to his subsequent amusement, that he was holding his breath as he stared at her from the opposite side of the banquet hall, which had been transformed into a ballroom. She had just entered with the Deppinghams. Something seemed to shout coarsely, scoffingly in his ear: "Now, do you realise the distance that lies between?

She was made for kings and princes, not for such as you!"

He waited long before presenting himself in quest of the dance he hungered for so greedily—afraid of her! She greeted him with a new, brighter light in her eyes; a quiver of delight, long in restraint, came into her voice; he saw and felt the welcome in her manner.

The blood surged to his head; he mumbled his request. Then, for the first time, he was near to holding her close in his arms—he was clasping her fingers, touching her waist, drawing her gently toward his heart. Once, as they swept around the almost empty ballroom, she looked up into his eyes. Neither had spoken. His lips parted suddenly and his fingers closed down upon hers. She saw the danger light in his eyes and knew the unuttered words that struggled to his lips and stopped there. She never knew why she did it, but she involuntarily shook her head before she lowered her eyes. He knew what she meant. His heart turned cold again and the distance widened once more to the old proportions.

He left her with Bobby Browne and went out upon the cool, starlit balcony. There he gently cursed himself for a fool, a dolt, an idiot.

The shouts of laughter and the clapping of hands on the inside did not draw him from his unhappy reverie. He did not know until afterward that the official announcement of the engagement of Miss Minnie Pelham and Thomas Saunders was made by Bobby Browne and the health of the couple drunk in a series of bumpers.

Chase's bitter reflections were at last disturbed by a sound that came sharply to his attention. He was staring moodily into the night, his cigarette drooping dejectedly in his lips. The noise came from directly below where he stood. He peered over the stone railing. The terrace was barely ten feet below him; a mass of

bushes fringed the base of the wall, dark, thick, fragrant. Some one was moving among these stubborn bushes; he could hear him plainly. The next moment a dark figure shot out from the shadows and slunk off into night, followed by another and another and yet others, seven in all. Chase's mind refused to work quickly. He stood as one petrified for a full minute, unable to at once grasp the meaning of the performance.

Then the truth suddenly dawned upon him. The prisoners had escaped from the dungeon!

He dashed into the ballroom and shouted the alarm. Confusion ensued. He called out sharp commands as he rushed across to where Deppingham was chatting with the Princess.

"There's been treachery," he explained quickly. "Some one has released the prisoners. We must keep them from reaching the walls. They will overpower our guards and open the gates to the enemy. Britt, see that the searchlight is trained on the gates. We must stop those fellows before it is too late. Time enough to hunt for the traitor later on!"

Two minutes later, a swarm of armed men forsook the mock charity ball and sallied forth to engage in realities. Firing was soon heard at the western gate, half a mile away. Thither, the eager pursuers rushed. The wide ray from the searchlight swung down upon this gate and revealed the forms of struggling men.

The prisoners had fallen suddenly upon the two Greeks who guarded the western gate, surprising them cleverly. The Greeks fought for their lives, but were overwhelmed in plain view of the relief party which raced toward them. Both fell under the clubbed guns of their adversaries.

Chase and Selim were not more than a hundred yards away when the desperate Greeks went down. The blinding glare of the searchlight aided the pursuers, who kept

outside its radius. The fugitives, bewildered, confused by the bright glare in which they found themselves, faced the light boldly, five of them kneeling with guns raised to protect their two companions who started across the narrow strip which separated them from the massive gate. Selim gave a shout and stopped suddenly, throwing his rifle to his shoulder.

"They have the keys!" he cried. "Shoot!"

His rifle cracked a second later and one of the two men leaped into the air and fell like a log. Chase understood the necessity for quick work and fired an instant later. The second man fell in a heap, thirty feet from the gate. His companions returned the fire at random in the direction from which the well-aimed shots had come.

"Under cover!" shouted Chase. He and Selim dropped into the shrubbery in time to escape a withering fire from outside the gates. The searchlight revealed a compact mass of men beyond the walls. It was then that the insiders realised how near they had come to being surprised and destroyed. A minute more, and the gates would have been opened to this merciless horde.

The prisoners, finding themselves trapped, threw themselves upon the ground and shrieked for mercy. Lord Deppingham and the others came up and, scattering well, began to fire at the mass outside the wall. The islanders were at a disadvantage. They could not locate the opposing marksmen on account of the blinding light in their faces. It was but a moment before they were scampering off into the dark wood, shrieking with rage.

The five fugitives were compelled to carry their fallen comrades and the two Greeks from the open space in front of the gates to a point where it was safe for the defenders to approach them without coming in line with a possible volley from the forest.

A small force was left to guard the gate; the remainder returned as quickly as possible to the château. The Greeks were unconscious, badly battered by the clubbed guns. Browne, once more the doctor, attended them and announced that they would be on their feet in a day or two—"if complications don't set in." One of the prisoners was dead, shot through the heart by the deadly Selim. The other had a shattered shoulder.

Immediately upon the return to the château, an inspection of the dungeons was made, prior to an examination of the servants in the effort to apprehend the traitor.

The three men who went down into the damp, chill regions below ground soon returned with set, pale faces. There had been no traitor!

The man whose duty it was to guard the prisoners was found lying inside the big cell, his throat cut from ear to ear, stone dead!

There was but one solution. He had been seized from within as he came to the grating in response to a call. While certain fingers choked him into silence, others held his hands and still others wrenched the keys from his sash. After that it was easy. Deppingham, Chase and Selim looked at each other in horror—and, strange as it may seem, relief.

Death was there, but, after all, Death is no traitor.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE JOY OF TEMPTATION

THE revolting details were kept from the women. They were not permitted to know of the ugly thing that sweltered in the dark corridor below their very feet. Late in the night, a small body of men, acting under orders, carried the unfortunate guard down into the valley and buried him. Only the most positive stand on the part of the white men prevented the massacre of the prisoners by the friends and fellow-servants of the murdered man. A secret trial by jury, at a later day, was promised by Lord Deppingham.

There was but little sleep in the château that night. The charity ball was forgotten—or if recalled at all, only in connection with the thought of what it came so near to costing its promoters.

No further disturbances occurred. A strict watch was preserved; the picturesque drawbridge was lifted and there were lights on the terrace and galleries; men slept within easy reach of their weapons. The siege had begun in earnest. Men had been slain and their blood was crying out for vengeance; the voice of justice was lost in the clamourings of rage.

Breakfast found no laggards; the lazy comforts of the habitually late were abandoned for the more stirring interests that had come to occupy the time and thoughts of all concerned. The Princess was quite serene. She lightly announced that the present state of affairs was no worse than that which she was accustomed to at home. The court of Rapp-Thorberg was ever in a state of unrest, despite its outward suggestion of security. Outbreaks were common among the masses; somehow, they

were suppressed before they grew large enough to be noticed by the wide world.

"We invariably come out on top," she philosophised, "and so shall we here. 'At home we always eat, drink and make merry, for to-morrow never comes."

"That's all very nice," said Lady Agnes plaintively, "but I'm thinking of yesterday. Those fellows who were killed can't die to-morrow, you know; it occurred to them yesterday. It's always yesterday after one dies."

Soon after breakfast was over, Chase announced his intention to visit each of the gates in turn. The Princess strolled with him as far as the bridge at the foot of the terrace. They stopped in the shade of a clump of trees that hung upon the edge of the stream. As they were gravely discussing the events of the night, Neenah came up to them from beyond the bridge. Her dark, brilliant face was glowing with excitement; the cheerful adoration that one sees in a dog's eyes shone in hers as she salaamed gracefully to the "Sahib." She had no eyes for royalty.

"Excellency," she began breathlessly, "it is Selim who would have private speech with the most gracious sahib. It is to be quick, excellency. Selim is under the ground, excellency."

"In the cellars?"

"Yes, excellency. It is so dark there that one cannot see, but Neenah will lead you. Selim has sent me. But come now!"

Chase felt his ears burn when he turned to find a delicate, significant smile on Genevra's lips. "Don't let me detain you," she said, ever so politely.

"Wait, please!" he exclaimed. "Is Selim hurt?" he demanded of Neenah, who shook her head vigorously.

"Then, there is no reason why you should not accompany us, Princess."

"I am not at all necessary to the undertaking," she said coldly, turning to leave him.

"Selim has found fuses and gunpowder laid in the cellars, excellency—in the secret vaults," began Neenah eagerly, divining the cause of the white lady's hesitation.

This astounding piece of news swept away the feeble barrier Genevra would have erected in her pique. Eagerly she joined in questioning the Persian girl, but Neenah would only reply that Selim was waiting for the sahib. The Princess was immeasurably consoled to find that the body-servant had destroyed the fuses and that they were in no immediate danger of being blown to pieces. She consented to accompany Chase into the cellars, a spirit of adventure overcoming certain scruples which might have restrained her under other conditions.

Neenah led them through the wine cellars and down into the vaults beyond the dungeons. They descended three steep flights of stone steps, into the cold, damp corridors of the lowermost cellars. Neenah explained that it was necessary to move cautiously and without lights. Selim was confident that there was at least one traitor among the servants. The Princess clutched Chase's hand tightly as they stole through the bleak, chill corridor; she found herself wondering if the girl was to be trusted. What if she were leading them into a trap? She would have whispered her fears into Chase's ear had not a sharp "sh' " come from the girl who was leading. Genevra felt a queer little throb of hatred for the girl—she could not explain it.

The dungeon was off to the right. They could hear the insistent murmur of voices, with now and then a laugh from the distant cells. The guard could be heard scoffing at his charges. With a caution that seemed wholly absurd to the two white people, Neenah guided them through the maze of narrow passages, dark as Erebus

and chill as the grave. Chase checked a hysterical impulse to laugh aloud at the proceedings; it was like playing at a children's game.

He was walking between the two women, Neenah ahead, Genevra behind; each clasped one of his hands. Suddenly he found himself experiencing an overpowering desire to exert the strength of his arm to draw the Princess close—close to his insistent body. The touch of her flesh, the clutch of her cold little hand, filled him with the most exquisite sense of possession; the magnetism of life charged from one to the other, striking fire to the blood; sex tingled in this delicious riot of the senses; all went to inspire and encourage the reckless joy that was mastering him. He felt his arm grow taut with the irresistible impulse. He was forgetting Neenah, forgetting himself—thinking only of the opportunity and its fascination. In another instant he would have drawn her hand to his lips: Neenah came to a standstill and uttered a warning whisper. Chase recovered himself with a mighty start, a chill as of one avoiding an unseen peril sweeping over him. Genevra heard the sharp, painful intake of his breath and felt the sudden relaxation of his fingers. She was not puzzled; she, too, had felt the magic of the touch and her blood was surging red; she knew, then, that she had been clasping his hand with a fervour that was as unmistakable as it was shameless.

She was again forgetting that princesses should dwell in the narrow realm of self.

Neenah may have felt the magnetic current that coursed through these surcharged creatures: she was smiling mysteriously to herself.

"Wait here," she whispered to Chase, ever so softly. She released his hand and moved off in the blackness of the passage. "I will bring Selim," came back to them.

"Oh!" fell faintly, tremulously from Genevra's lips. It was a trap, after all! But it was not the trap laid by a traitor. She fell all a-quiver. Her heart fluttered violently, her breath came quickly. Alone with him—and their blood leaping to the touch that thrilled!

Chase could no more have restrained the hand that went out suddenly in quest of hers than he could have checked his own heart throbs. A wave of exquisite joy swept over him—the joy of a temptation that knew no fear or conscience. He found her cold little hand and clasped it in tense fingers—fingers that throbbed with the call to passion. He drew her close—their bodies touched and sweetly trembled. His lips were close to her ear—the smell of her hair was in his quivering nostrils. He heard her quick, sharp breathing.

"Are you afraid?" he whispered in tones he had never heard before.

"Yes," she murmured convulsively—"of you! Please, please, don't!" At the same time, she tightened her clutch upon his hand and crept closer to him, governed by an unconquerable craving. Chase had the sensation of smothering; he could not believe the senses which told him that she was responding to his appeal. His brain was whirling, his heart bounding like mad. Her voice, soft and appealing, turned his blood to fire.

"Genevra!" he murmured—almost gasped—in his delirium. Their bodies were pressed close to each other—his arms went about her slender figure suddenly and she was strained to his breast, locked to him with bonds that seemed unbreakable. Her face was lifted to his. The blackness of the passage was impenetrable, but love was the guide. He found her lips in one wild, glorious kiss.

A door creaked sharply. He released her. Their quivering arms fell away; they drew ever so slightly apart, still under the control of the influence which had held

them for that brief moment. She was trembling violently. A soft, wailing sigh, as of pain, came from her lips.

Then the glimmer of a light came to them through the half open door at the end of the passage. They gazed at it without comprehension, dumb in their sudden weakness. A shadowy figure came out through the door and Selim's voice, low and tense, called to them.

Still speechless, they moved forward involuntarily. He did not attempt to take her hand. He was afraid—vastly afraid of what he had done, unaccountable as it may seem. That piteous sigh wrought shame in his heart. He felt that he had wronged her—had seized upon a willing, hapless victim when she had not the power to defend herself against her own impulses.

"Forgive me," he murmured.

"It is too late," she replied. Then his hand sought hers again and, dizzy with emotion, he led her up to the open door. As they passed into the huge, dimly lighted chamber, he turned to look into her face. She met his gaze and there were tears in her eyes. Selim was ahead of them. She shook her head sadly and he understood.

"Can we ever forget?" she murmured plaintively.

"Never!" he whispered.

"Then we shall always regret—always regret!" she said, withdrawing her hand. "It was the beginning and the end."

"Not the end, dearest one—if we are always to regret," he interposed eagerly. "But why the end? You *do* love me! I know it! And I worship you—oh, you don't know how I worship you, Genevra! I——"

"Hush! We were fools! Don't, please! I do *not* love you. I was carried away by— Oh, can't you understand? Remember what I am! You knew and yet you have degraded me in my own eyes. Is my own self-

respect nothing? You will laugh and you may boast after I am married to——"

"Genevra!" he protested as if in great pain.

"Excellency," came from the lips of Selim, at the lower end of the chamber, breaking in sharply upon their little world. "There is no time to be lost." Time to be lost! And he had held her in his arms! Time to be lost! All the rest of Time was to be lost! "They may return at any moment."

Chase pulled himself together. He looked into her eyes for a moment, finding nothing there but a command to go. She stood straight and unyielding on the very spot which had seen her trembling with emotion but a moment before.

"Coming, Selim," he said, and moved away from her side as Neenah came toward them from the opposite wall. Genevra did not move. She stood quite still and numb, watching his tall figure crossing the stone floor. Ah, what a man he was! The little Persian wife of Selim, after waiting for a full minute, gently touched the arm of the Princess. Genevra started and looked down into the dark, accusing, smiling eyes. She flushed deeply and hated herself.

"Shall we go back?" she asked nervously. "I—I have seen enough. Come, Neenah. Lead me back to——"

"Most glorious excellency," said Neenah, shaking her pretty head, "we are to wait here. The sahib and Selim will join us soon."

"Where are they going?" demanded the Princess, a feeling of awe coming over her. "I don't want to be left here alone." Chase and Selim had opened a low, heavy iron door at the lower end and were peering into the darkness beyond.

"Selim will explain. He has learned much. It is the secret passage to the coast. Be not afraid."

Genevra looked about her for the first time. They were standing in a long, low room, the walls of which reeked with dampness and gave out a noxious odour. A single electric light provided a faint, almost unnatural light. Selim raised a lighted lantern as he led Chase through the squat door. Behind Genevra were enormous casks, a dozen or more, reaching almost to the ceiling. A number of boxes stood close by, while on the opposite side of the chamber four small iron chests were to be seen, dragged out from recesses in the distant corner. It was not unlike the mysterious treasure cave of the pirates that her brother had stealthily read about to her in childhood days. Observing her look of wonder, Neenah vouchsafed a casual explanation.

"It is the wine cellar and the storeroom. The iron chests contain the silver and gold plate that came from the great Rajah of Murpat in exchange for the five huge rubies which now adorn his crown. The Rajah bartered his entire service of gold and silver for those wonderful gems. The old sahibs stored the chests here many years ago. But few know of their existence. See! They were hidden in the walls over there. Von Blitz has found them."

"Von Blitz!" in amazement.

"He has been here. He has carried away many chests. There were twenty in all."

"And—and he will return for these?" queried the Princess in alarm.

"Assuredly, most glorious one. Soon, perhaps. But be not afraid. Selim can close the passage door. He cannot get in. He will be fooled, eh? Why should you be afraid? Have you not with you the most wonderful, the most brave sahib? Would he not give his life for you?" The dark eyes sparkled with understanding—aye, even mischief. Genevra felt that this Oriental witch

knew everything. For a long time she looked in uncertain mood upon that smiling, wistful face. Then she said softly, moved by an irresistible impulse to confess something, even obscurely:

"Oh, if only I were such as you, Neenah, and could live forever on this dear island!"

Neenah's smile deepened, her eyes glowed with discernment. With a meaning gleam in their depths, she said: "But, most high, there are no princes here. There is no one to whom the most gracious one could be sold. No one who could pay more than a dozen rubies. Women are cheap here, and you would be a woman, not a most beautiful princess."

"I would not care to be a princess, perhaps."

"You love my Sahib Chase?" demanded Neenah abruptly, eagerly.

"Neenah!" gasped Genevra, with a startled look. Neenah looked intently into the unsteady, blue-grey eyes and then bent over to kiss the hand of the Princess. The latter laughed almost aloud in her confusion. She caught herself up quickly and said with some asperity: "You foolish child, I am to become a prince's wife. How can I love your sahib? What nonsense! I am to marry a prince and he is not to pay for me in rubies."

"Ah, how wonderful!" cried Neenah, with ravishing candour. "A prince for a husband and the glorious Sahib Chase for a lover all your life! Ah!" The exclamation was no less than a sigh of rapturous endorsement.

The Princess stared at her first in consternation, then in dismay. Before she could find words to combat this alarming prophecy, so ingenuously presented to her reflections, Selim and Hollingsworth Chase returned to the chamber. She was distressed, even confounded, to find

that she was staring at Chase with a strange, abashed curiosity growing in her eyes—a stare that she suddenly was afraid he might observe and appreciate. A wave of revulsion, of shame, spread over her whole being. She shuddered slightly as she turned her face away from his eager gaze: it was as if she recognised the fear that he was even now contemplating the future as Neenah had painted it for her.

She caught and checked a horrid arraignment of herself. Such conditions as Neenah presented were not unknown to her. With the swiftness of lightning, she recalled the things that had been said of more than one grand dame in Europe—aye, of women at her own court. Even a princess she had known who—but for shame! she cried in her heart. It could not be! Despite herself, a cruel, distressing shyness came over her as he approached, his eyes glowing with the light she feared yet craved. Was this man to remain in her life? *Was he?* Would he come to her and wage the unfair war? Was he honest? Was he even now coveting her as other men had coveted the women she knew and despised? She found herself confronted by the shocking conviction that he *knew* she could never be his wife. He *knew* she was to wed another, and yet— It was unbelievable!

She met his eager advance with a quick, shrill laugh of defiance, and noted the surprise in his eyes. Dim as the light was, she could have sworn that the look in those eyes was honest. Ah, that silly Neenah! The reaction was as sudden as the revolt had been. Her smile grew warm and shy.

"Von Blitz has been here," he was saying, half diffidently, still searching deep in her eyes. "He's played hob. And he's likely to return at any minute."

"Then let us go quickly. I have no desire to meet the objectionable Mr. Von Blitz. Isn't it dreadfully dan-

gerous here, Mr. Chase?" He mistook the slight tremour in her voice for that of fear. A quaint look came into his face, the lines about the corners of his mouth drooping dolefully.

"Mr. Chase?" he said, with his winning smile. "Now?"

"Yes, now and always, Mr. Chase," she said steadily. "You know that it cannot be otherwise. I can't always be a fool."

His face turned a deep red; his lips parted for retort to this truculent estimate, but he controlled himself.

"Yes, it is dangerous here," he said quietly, answering her question. "As soon as Selim bars that door upon the inside, we'll go. I was a fool to bring you here."

"How could you know what the dangers would be?" she asked.

"I'll confess I didn't expect Von Blitz," he said drily.

"But you did expect—" she began, with a start, biting her lips.

"There's a vast difference between expectation and hope, Princess." Neenah had joined Selim at the door when the men re-entered the chamber. Now she was approaching with her husband.

"May Allah bless you and profit for Himself, excellencies," said the good Selim. Neenah plainly had advanced her suspicions to the brown body-servant. Genevra blushed and then her eyes blazed. She gave the girl a scornful look; Neenah smiled happily, unreservedly in return.

"Allah help us, you should say, if Von Blitz returns," interposed Chase hastily. "Is the door barred?"

"No, excellency. The bars have sprung. I cannot drop them in place. As you know, the lock has been blown away. The charge sprung the bolts. We must go at once."

"Then there is no way to keep them out of the château?" cried Genevra anxiously.

"They can go no farther than this room," explained Selim. "We lock the double iron doors from the other side—the door through which you came, most glorious excellency—and they cannot enter the cellars above. This is the chamber which opens into the underground passage to the coast. The passage was made for escape from the château in case of trouble and was known to but few. My father was the servant of Sahib Wyckholme, and I used to live in the château. We came to the island when I was a baby. My father had been with the sahib in Africa. I came to know of this passage, for my father and my mother were to go with the masters if there was an attack. Five years ago I was given a place in the company's office, and I never came up here after my parents died of the plague. We were——"

"The plague!" cried the Princess.

"It was said to have been the plague," said Selim bitterly. "They died in great convulsions while spending the night in the Khan. That's the inn of Aratat, excellencies. The great sahibs sent their stomachs away to be examined——"

"Never mind, Selim," said Chase. "Tell us about the passage there."

"Once there was a boat—a launch, which lay hidden below the cliffs on the north coast. The passage led to this boat. It was always ready to put out to sea. But one night it was destroyed by the great rocks which fell from the cliffs in an earthquake. When I came here, I at once thought of the passage. You will see that the doors into the cellar cannot be opened from this chamber; the locks and bolts are on the other side. I knew where the keys were hidden. It was easy to unlock the

doors and come into this room. I found that some one had been here before me. The door to the passage had been forced open from without—cracked by dynamite. Many of the treasure boxes have been removed. Von Blitz was here not an hour ago. He wears boots. I saw the footprints among the naked ones in the passage. They will come back for the other chests. Then they will blow up the passage way with powder and escape from the château through it will be cut off. I have found the kegs of powder in the passage and have destroyed the fuses. It will be of no avail, sahib. They will blow it up at the other end, which will be just the same."

"There's no time to be lost," cried Chase. "We must bring enough men down here to capture them when they return—shoot 'em if necessary. Come on! We can surprise them if we hurry."

They were starting across the chamber toward the door, when a gruff, sepulchral oath came rolling up to the chamber through the secret passage. Quick as a flash Selim, who realised that they could not reach and open the door leading to the stairs, turned in among the huge wine casks, first blinding his lantern. He whispered for the others to follow. In a moment they were squeezing themselves through the narrow spaces between the dark, strong-smelling casks, back into a darkness so opaque that it seemed lifeless. Selim halted them in a recess near the wall and there they huddled, breathlessly awaiting the approach of the invaders.

"They won't suspect that we are here," whispered Selim as the door to the passage creaked. "Keep quiet! Don't breathe!"

The single electric light was still burning, as Selim had found it when he first came. The door swung open slowly, heavily, and Jacob von Blitz, half naked, mud-

covered, reeking with perspiration, and panting savagely, stepped into the light. Behind him came a man with a lantern, and behind him two others.

They were white men, all. Von Blitz turned suddenly and cursed the man with the lantern. The fellow was ready to drop with exhaustion. Evidently it had been no easy task to remove the chests.

CHAPTER XXIV

SEVERAL PHILOSOPHERS

THE four burly men sat down upon the chests, Von Blitz alone being visible to the watchers. They were fagged to the last extreme.

"Dis is der last," panted Von Blitz, blowing hard and stretching his big arms. The guttural German tones were highly accentuated by the effort required in speaking. His three helpers said nothing in reply. For fully five minutes the quartette sat silent, collecting their strength for the next trip with the chests. Again it was Von Blitz who spoke. He had been staring savagely at the floor for several minutes, brooding deeply.

"I fix him," he growled. "His time vill come, by tam! I let him know he can't take my vives avay mit him. Der dog! I fix him some day purdy soon. Und dem tam vimmens! Dem tam hyenas! Dey run avay mit him, eh? Ach, Gott, if I could only put my hands by deir necks yet!"

"Vat for you fret, Yacob?" growled one of the Boers. "You couldn't take dose vimmens back by Europe mit you. I tink you got goot luck by losing dem. Misder Chase can't take dem back needer—so, dey go to hell yet. Don't fret."

"Vell," said Von Blitz, arising. "Come on, boys. Dis is der lasd cf dem. Den ve blow der tam t'ing up. Grab hold dere, Joost. Up mit it, Jan. Vat? No?"

"Gott in himmel, Yacob, vait a minutes. My back is proke," protested Joost stubbornly. Von Blitz swore steadily for a minute, but could not move the impassive Boers. He began pacing back and forth, growling to himself. At last he stopped in front of the tired trio.

"Vat for you tink I vant you in on dis, you svine? To set aroundt und dream? Nobody else knows aboud dis treasures, und ve got it all for ourselves—ve four und no more, und you say, 'Vat's der hurry?' It's all ours. Ve divide it oop in der cave mit all der money ve get from der bank. Vat? Yes? Den, ven der time comes, ve send it all by Australia und no von is der viser. Der natives von't know und der white peebles von't be alive to care aboudt it. Ve let it stay hided in der cave undil dis drouble is all over und den it vill be easy to get it avay from der island, yoost so quiet. Come on, boys! Don't be lazy!"

"I don't like dot scheme to rob der bank," growled Jan. "If der peeples get onto us, dey vould cut us to bieces."

"But dey von't get onto us, you fool. Dey vouldn't take it demselves if it vas handed to dem. Dey're too honest, yes. Vell, don't dey say ve're honest, too? Vell, vat more you vant? Dey don't know how much money und rubies dere is in der bank. Ve von't take all of it—und dey von't know der difference. Ve burn der books. Das is all. Ve get in by der bank to-night, boys."

"I don't like id," said Joost. "Id's stealing from our freunds, Yacob. Besides, if der oder heirs should go before der government mit der story. Vat den?"

"Der oder heirs vill never get der chance, boys. Dey vill die mit der plague—ha, ha! Sure! Dere von't be no oder heirs. Rasula says it must be so. Ve can'd vait, boys. It vill be years before der business is settled. Ve must get vat ve can now and vait for der decision aftervards. Brodney has wrote to Rasula, saying dat dot Chase feller is to stay here vedder ve vant him or not. He says Chase is a goot man! By tam, it makes me cry to t'ink of vot he has done by me—dot goot man!"

To the amazement of all, the burly German began to blubber.

"Don't cry, Yacob," cried Joost, coming to his master's side and shaking him by the shoulder. "You can get oder vives some day—besser as dese, yes!"

"Joost, I can't help crying—I can't. Ven I t'ink how I got to kill dem yet! I hates to kill vimmens."

They permitted him to weep and swear for a few minutes. Then, without offering further consolation, the three foremen made ready to take up the remaining chests.

"Come on, Yacob," said Jan gruffly.

Von Blitz shook his fist at the door across the chamber and thundered his final maledictions.

"Sir John says in der letter to Misder Chase dere is a movements on foot in London to settle der contest out of court," volunteered Joost.

"Sure, but he also say dat ve all may die mit old age before it is over yet."

"Don't forget der plague!" said Jan.

They groaned mightily as they lifted the heavy chests to their shoulders and started for the door.

"Close der door, Jan," commanded Von Blitz from the passage. "Ve vill light der fuse ven ve haf got beyond der first bend. Vat? Look! By tam, von of you swine has broke der fuse. Vait! Ve vill fix him now."

The door was closed behind them, but the listeners could hear them repairing the damage that Selim had done to the fuse.

Led by Selim, the four made a rush for the door leading into the château. They threw it open and passed through, flying as if for their lives. No one could tell how soon an explosion might bring disaster to the region; they put distance between them and the powder keg. Selim paused long enough to drop the bolts and

turn the great key with the lever. At the second turn in the narrow corridor, he overtook Chase and the scurrying women.

"Is there nothing to be done?" cried the Princess. "Can we not prevent the explosion? They will cut off our means of escape in that——"

"I know too much about gunpowder, Princess," said Chase drily, "to fool with it. It's like a mule. It kicks hard. 'Gad, it was hard to stand there and hear those brutes planning it all and not be able to stop them."

The Princess was once more at his side; he had clasped her arm to lead her securely in the wake of Neenah's electric lantern. She came to a sudden stop.

"And pray, Mr. Chase," she said sharply, as if the thought occurred to her for the first time, "why *didn't* you stop them? You had the advantage. You and Selim could have surprised them—you could have taken them without a struggle!"

He laughed softly, deprecatingly, not a little impressed by the justice of her criticism.

"No doubt you consider me a coward," he said ruefully.

"You know that I do not," she protested. "I—I can't understand your motive, that is all."

"You forget that I am the representative of these very men. I am the trusted agent of Sir John Brodney, who has refused to supplant me with another. All this may sound ridiculous to you, when you take my anomalous position into account. I can't very well represent Sir John and at the same time make prisoners or corpses of his clients, even though I am being shielded by their legal foes. I don't mean to say that I condone the attempt Von Blitz is making to rob his fellow-workmen of this hidden plate and the plunder in the bank.

They are traitors to their friends and I shall turn them over sooner or later to the people they are looting. I'll not have Von Blitz saying, even to himself, that I have not only stolen his wives but have also cast him into the hands of his philistines. It may sound quixotic to you, but I think that Lord Deppingham and Mr. Browne will understand my attitude."

"But Von Blitz has sworn to kill you," she expostulated with some heat. "You are wasting your integrity, I must say, Mr. Chase."

"Would you have me shoot him from ambush?" he demanded.

"Not at all. You could have taken him captive and held him safe until the time comes for you to leave the island."

"He would not have been my captive in any event. I could do no more than deliver him into the hands of his enemies. Would that be fair?"

"But he is a thief!"

"No more so than Taswell Skaggs and John Wyckholme, who unquestionably cheated the natives out of the very treasure we have seen carried away."

"Admitting all that, Mr. Chase, you still forget that he has stolen property which now belongs quite as much to Lady Deppingham and Mr. Browne as it does to the natives."

"Quite true. But I am not a constable nor a thief catcher. I am a soldier of the defence, not an officer of the Crown at this stage of the game. To-day I shall contrive to send word to Rasula that Von Blitz has stolen the treasure chests. Mr. Von Blitz will have a sad time explaining this little defection to his friends. We must not overlook the fact that Lady Deppingham and Robert Browne are quite willing to take everything from the islanders. Everything that Taswell Skaggs

and John Wyckholme possessed in this island belongs to them under the terms of the will."

They were at the top of the second flight of stairs by this time and quite a distance from the treasure chamber. His coolness, the absence of any sign of returning sentiment, was puzzling her sorely. Every vestige of that emotion which had overwhelmed him during their sweet encounter was gone, to all appearances: he was as calm and as matter-of-fact as if she were the merest stranger. She was trying to find the solution—trying to read the mind of this smiling philosopher. Half an hour before, she had been carried away, rendered helpless by the passion that swayed him; now he spoke and looked as if he had forgotten the result of his storming. Strangely enough, she was piqued.

When they came into the well-lighted upper corridor he proceeded ruthlessly to upset all of her harsh calculations. They were now traversing the mosaic floors of the hall that led to the lower terraces. He stopped suddenly, stepping directly in front of her. As she drew up in surprise, he reached down and took both of her hands in his. For the moment, she was too amazed to oppose this sudden action. She looked up into his face, many emotions in her own—reproof, wonder, dismay, hauteur—joy!

"Wait," he said gently. They were quite alone. The stream of daylight from the distant French windows barely reached to this quiet spot. She saw the most wonderful light in his grey eyes; her lips parted in quick, timorous confusion. "I love you. I am sorry for what I did down there. I couldn't help it—nor could you. Yet I took a cruel advantage of you. I know what you've been thinking, too. You have been saying to yourself that I wanted to see how far I could go—don't speak! I know. You are wrong. I've absolutely

worshipped you since those first days in Thorberg—wildly, hopelessly—day and night. I was afraid of you—yes, afraid of you because you are a princess. But I've got over all that, Genevra. You are a woman—a living, real woman with the blood and the heart and the lips that were made for men to crave. I want to tell you this, here in the light of day, not in the darkness that hid all the truth in me except that which you might have felt in my kiss."

"Please, please don't," she said once more, her lip trembling, her eyes full of the softness that the woman who loves cannot hide. "You shall not go on! It is wrong!"

"It is not wrong," he cried passionately. "My love is not wrong. I want you to understand and to believe. I can't hope that you will be my wife—it's too wildly improbable. You are not for such as I. You are pledged to a man of your own world—your own exalted world. But listen, Genevra—see, my eyes call you darling even though my lips dare not—Genevra, I'd give my soul to hear you say that you will be my wife. You *do* understand how it is with me?"

The delicious sense of possession thrilled her; she glowed with the return of her self-esteem, in the restoration of that quality which proclaimed her a princess of the blood. She was sure of him now! She was sure of herself. She had her emotions well in hand. And so, despite the delicious warmth that swept through her being, she chose to reveal no sign of it to him.

"I do understand," she said quietly, meeting his gaze with a directness that hurt him sorely. "And you, too, understand. I could not be your wife. I am glad yet sorry that you love me, and I am proud to have heard you say that you want me. But I am a sensible creature, Mr. Chase, and, being sensible, am therefore selfish. I

have seen women of my unhappy station venture outside of their narrow confines in the search for life-long joy with men who might have been kings had they not been born under happier stars—men of the great wide world instead of the soulless, heartless patch which such as I call a realm. Not one in a hundred of those women found the happiness they were so sure of grasping just outside their prison walls. It was not in the blood. We are the embodiment of convention, the product of tradition. Time has proved in nearly every instance that we cannot step from the path our prejudices know. We must marry and live and die in the sphere to which we were born. It must sound very bald to you, but the fact remains, just the same. We must go through life unloved and uncherished, bringing princes into the world, seeing happiness and love just beyond our reach all the time. We have hearts and we have blood in our veins, as you say, and we may love, too, but believe me, dear friend, we are bound by chains no force can break—the chains of prejudice."

She had withdrawn her hands from his; he was standing before her as calm and unmoved as a statue.

"I understand all of that," he said, a faint smile moving his lips. She was not expecting such resignation as this.

"I am glad that you—that you understand," she said.

"Just the same," he went on gently, "you love me as I love you. You kissed me. I could feel love in you then. I can see it in you now. Perhaps you are right in what you say about not finding happiness outside the walls, but I doubt it, Genevra. You will marry Prince Karl in June, and all the rest of your life will be bleak December. You will never forget this month of March—our month." He paused for a moment to look

deeply into her incredulous eyes. His face writhed in sudden pain. Then he burst forth with a vehemence that startled her. "My God, I pity you with all my soul! All your life!"

"Don't pity me!" she cried fiercely. "I cannot endure that!"

"Forgive me! I shouldn't say such things to you. It's as if I were bullying you."

"You must not think of me as unhappy—ever. Go on your own way, Hollingsworth Chase, and forget that you have known me. *You* will find happiness with some one else. You have loved before; you can and will love again. I—I have never loved before—but perhaps, like you, I shall love again. You *will* love again?" she demanded, her lip trembling with an irresolution she could not control.

"Yes," he said calmly, "I'll love the wife of Karl Brabetz." His eyes swept hungrily over the golden bronze hair; then he turned away with the short, hard laugh of the man who scoffs at his own despair. She started violently; her cheek went red and white and her eyes widened as though they were looking upon something unpleasant; her thoughts went back to the naïve prophecy in the treasure chamber.

She followed him slowly to the terrace. He stopped in the doorway and leisurely drew forth his cigarette case.

"Shall we wait for the explosion?" he asked without a sign of the emotion that had gone before. She gravely selected a cigarette from the case which he extended. As he lighted his own, he watched her draw from her little gold bag a diamond-studded case, half filled. Without a word of apology, she calmly deposited the cigarette in the case and restored it to the bottom of the bag.

Then she looked up brightly. "I am not smoking, you

see," she said, with a smile. "I am saving all of these for you when the famine comes."

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, something like incredulity in the smile that transfigured his face.

"I *could* be a thrifty housewife, couldn't I?" she asked naïvely.

At that moment, a dull, heavy report, as of distant thunder, came to their ears. The windows rattled sharply and the earth beneath them seemed to quiver. Involuntarily she drew nearer to him, casting a glance of alarm over her shoulder in the direction from which they had come.

"You could, if you had half a chance," he said drily, and then casually remarked the explosion.

CHAPTER XXV

THE DISQUIETING END OF PONG

LATER on, he and Deppingham visited the underground chamber, accompanied by Mr. Britt. They found that the door to the passage had been blown away by the terrific concussion. Otherwise, the room was, to all appearances, undamaged, except that some of the wine casks were leaking. The subterranean passage at this place was completely filled with earth and stone.

Deppingham stared at the closed mouth of the passage. "They've cut off our exit, but they've also secured us from invasion from this source. I wonder if the beggars were clever enough to carry the plunder above the flood line. If not, they've had their work for nothing."

"Selim says there is a cave near the mouth of the passage," said Chase. "The tunnel comes out half way up the side of the mountain, overlooking the sea, and the hole is very carefully screened by the thick shrubbery. Trust Von Blitz to do the safe thing."

"I don't mind Von Blitz escaping so much, Chase," said his lordship earnestly, "as I do the unfortunate closing of what may have been our only way to leave the château in the end."

"You must think me an ungrateful fool," said Chase bitterly. He had already stated his position clearly.

"Not at all, old chap. Don't get that into your head. I only meant that a hole in the ground is worth two warships that won't come when we need 'em."

Chase looked up quickly. "You don't believe that I can call the cruisers?"

"Oh, come now, Chase, I'm not a demmed native, you know."

The other grinned amiably. "Well, you just wait, as the boy says."

Deppingham put his eyeglass in more firmly and stared at his companion, not knowing whether to take the remark as a jest or to begin to look for signs of mental collapse. Britt laughed shortly.

"I guess we'll have to," said the stubby lawyer.

After satisfying themselves that there was no possibility of the enemy ever being able to enter the château through the collapsed passage, the trio returned to the upper world.

Involuntarily their gaze went out searchingly over the placid sea. The whole sky glared back at them, unwrinkled, smokeless, cloudless. Chase turned to Deppingham, a word of encouragement on his lips. His lordship was looking intently toward the palm-shaded grotto at the base of the lower terrace. Britt moved uneasily and then glanced at his fellow-countryman, a queer expression in his eyes. A moment later Deppingham was clearing his throat for the brisk comment on the beauty of the view from the rather unfrequented spot on which they stood.

Robert Browne and Lady Agnes were seated on the edge of the fountain in Apollo's Grotto, conversing earnestly, even eagerly, with Mr. Bowles, who stood before them in an unmistakable attitude of indecision and perturbation. Deppingham's first futile attempt to appear unconcerned was followed by an oppressive silence, broken at last by the Englishman. He gave Chase a look which plainly revealed his uneasiness.

"Ever since I've heard that Bowles has the power to marry people, Chase, I've been upset a bit," he explained nervously.

"You don't mean to say, Lord Deppingham, that you're afraid the heirs will follow the advice of that

rattle-headed Saunders," said Chase, with a laugh. "Why, it wouldn't hold in court for a second. Ask Britt."

Britt cleared his throat. "Not for half a second," he said. "I'm only wondering if Bowles has authority to grant divorces."

"I daresay he has," said Deppingham, tugging at his moustache. "He's—he's a magistrate."

"It doesn't follow," said Chase, "that he has unlimited legal powers."

"But *what* are they ragging him about down there, Chase," blurted out the unhappy Deppingham.

"Come in and have a drink," said Chase suddenly. Deppingham was shivering. "You've got a chill in that damp cellar. I can assure you positively, as representative of the opposition, that the grandchildren of Skaggs and Wyckholme are not going to divorce or marry anybody while I'm here, Britt and Saunders and Bowles to the contrary. And Lady Deppingham is no fool. Come on and have something to warm the cockles. You're just childish enough to have the croup to-night." He said it with such fine humour that Deppingham could not take offence.

"All right, old chap," he said with a laugh. "I am chilled to the bone. I'll join you in a few minutes." To their surprise, he started off across the terrace in the direction of the consulting trio. Chase and Britt silently watched his progress. They saw him join the others, neither of whom seemed to be confused or upset by his appearance, and subsequently enter into the discussion that had been going on.

"Just the same, Chase," said Britt, after a long silence, "he's worried, and not about marriage or divorce, either. He's jealous. I didn't believe it was in him."

"See here, Britt, you've no right to stir him up with

those confounded remarks about divorce. You know that it's rot. Don't do it."

"My dear Chase," said Britt, waving his hand serenely, "we can't always see what's in the air, but, by the Eternal, we usually can feel it. 'Nough said. Give you my word, I can't help laughing at the position you're in at present. It doesn't matter what you get onto in connection with our side of the case, you're where you can't take advantage of it without getting killed by your own clients. Horrible paradox, eh?"

When Deppingham rejoined them, he was pale and very nervous. His wife, who had been weeping, came up with him, while Browne went off toward the stables with the ex-banker.

"What do you think has happened?" demanded his lordship, addressing the two men, who stood by, irresolutely. "Somebody's trying to poison us!"

"What!" from both listeners.

"I've said it all along. Now, we know! Lady Deppingham's dog is dead—poisoned, gentlemen." He was wiping the moisture from his brow.

"I'm sorry, Lady Deppingham," said Chase earnestly. "He was a nice dog. But I hardly think he could have eaten what was intended for any of us. If he was poisoned, the poison was meant for him and for no one else. He bit one of the stable boys yesterday. It——"

"That may all be very true, Chase," protested his lordship, "but don't you see, it goes to show that some one has a stock of poison on hand, and we may be the next to get it. He died half an hour after eating—after eating a biscuit that was intended for *me!* It's—it's demmed uncomfortable, to say the least."

"Mr. Bowles has been questioning the servants," said Lady Agnes miserably.

"Of course," said Chase philosophically, "it's much

better that Pong should have got it than Lord Deppingham. By the way, who gave him the biscuit?"

"Bromley. She tossed it to him and he—he caught it so cleverly. You know how cunning he was, Mr. Chase. I loved to see him catch——"

"Then Bromley has saved your life, Deppingham," said Chase. "I'm sure you need the brandy, after all this. Come along. Will you join us, Lady Deppingham?"

"No. I'm going to bed!" She started away, then stopped and looked at her husband, her eyes wide with sudden comprehension. "Oh, Deppy, I should have died! I should have died!"

"My dear!"

"I couldn't have lived if——"

"But, my dear, I *didn't* eat it—and here we are! God bless you!" He turned abruptly and walked off beside her, ignoring the two distressed Americans. As they passed through the French window, Deppingham put his arm about his wife's waist. Chase turned to Britt.

"I don't know what you're thinking, Britt, but it isn't so, whatever it is."

"Good Lord, man, I wasn't thinking *that!*"

A very significant fact now stared the occupants of the château in the face. There was not the slightest doubt in the minds of those conversant with the situation that the poison had been intended for either Lord or Lady Deppingham. The drug had been subtly, skilfully placed in one of the sandwiches which came up to their rooms at eleven o'clock, the hour at which they invariably drank off a cup of bouillon. Lady Deppingham was not in her room when Bromley brought the tray. She was on the gallery with the Brownes. Bromley came to ask her if she desired to have the bouillon served to her there. Lady Agnes directed her

to fetch the tray, first inviting Mrs. Browne to accept Lord Deppingham's portion. Drusilla declined and Bromley tossed a sandwich to Pong, who was always lying in wait for such scraps as might come his way. Lady Agnes always ate macaroons—never touching the sandwiches. This fact, of course, it was argued, might not have been known to the would-be poisoner. Her ladyship, as usual, partook of the macaroons and felt no ill effects. It was, therefore, clear that the poison was intended for but one of them, as, on this occasion, a single sandwich came up from the buffet. No one but Deppingham believed that it was intended for him.

In any event, Pong, the red cocker, was dead. He was in convulsions almost immediately after swallowing the morsel he had begged for, and in less than three minutes was out of his misery, proving conclusively that a dose of deadly proportions had been administered. It is no wonder that Deppingham shuddered as he looked upon the stiff little body in the upper hall.

Drusilla Browne was jesting, no doubt, but it is doubtful if any one grasped the delicacy of her humour when she observed, in mock concern, addressing the assembled mourners, that she believed the heirs were trying to get rid of their incumbrances after the good old Borgia fashion, and that she would never again have the courage to eat a mouthful of food so long as she stood between her husband and a hymeneal fortune.

"You know, my dear," she concluded, turning to her husband, "that I *might* have had Lord Deppingham's biscuit. His wife asked me to take it. Goodness, you're a dreadful Borgia person, Agnes," she went on, smiling brightly at her ladyship. Deppingham was fumbling nervously at his monocle. "I should think you *would* be nervous, Lord Deppingham."

The most rigid questioning elicited no information from

the servants. Baillo's sudden, involuntary look of suspicion, directed toward Lady Agnes and Robert Browne, did not escape the keen eye of Hollingsworth Chase.

"Impossible!" he said, half aloud. He looked up and saw that the Princess was staring at him questioningly. He shook his head, without thinking.

Despair settled upon the white people. They were confronted by a new and serious peril: poison! At no time could they feel safe. Chase took it upon himself to talk to the native servants, urging them to do nothing that might reflect suspicion upon them. He argued long and forcefully from the standpoint of a friend and counsellor. They listened stolidly and repeated their vows of fidelity and integrity. He was astute enough to take them into his confidence concerning the treachery of Jacob Von Blitz. It was only after most earnest pleading that he persuaded them not to slay the German's wives as a temporary expedient.

One of the stable boys volunteered to carry a note from Chase to Rasula, asking the opportunity to lay a question of grave importance before him. Chase suggested to Rasula that he should meet him that evening at the west gate, under a flag of truce. The tone of the letter was more or less peremptory.

Rasula came, sullen but curious. At first he would not believe; but Chase was firm in his denunciation of Jacob von Blitz. Then he was pleased to accuse Chase of duplicity and double-dealing, going so far as to charge the deposed American with plotting against Von Blitz to further his own ends in more ways than one. At last, however, when he was ready to give up in despair, Chase saw signs of conviction in the manner of the native leader. His own fairness, his courage, had appealed to Rasula from the start. He did not know it then, but the dark-skinned lawyer had always felt, despite his envy

and resentment, a certain respect for his integrity and fearlessness.

He finally agreed to follow the advice of the American; grudgingly, to be sure, but none the less determined.

"You will find everything as I have stated it, Rasula," said Chase. "I'm sorry you are against me, for I would be your friend. I've told you how to reach the secret cave. The chests are there. The passage is closed. You can trap him in the attempt to rob the bank. I could have taken him red-handed and given him over to Lord Deppingham. But you would never have known the truth. Now I ask you to judge for yourselves. Give him a fair trial, Rasula—as you would any man accused of crime—and be just. If you need a witness—an eye-witness—call on me. I will come and I will appear against him. I've been honest with you. I am willing to trust you to be honest with me."

CHAPTER XXVI

DEPPINGHAM FALLS ILL

THAT evening Lord Deppingham took to his bed with violent chills. He shivered and burned by turns and spent a most distressing night. Bobby Browne came in twice to see him before retiring. For some reason unknown to any one but himself, Deppingham refused to be treated by the young man, notwithstanding the fact that Browne laid claim to a physician's certificate and professed to be especially successful in breaking up "the ague." Lady Agnes entreated her liege lord to submit to the doses, but Deppingham was resolute to irascibility.

"A Dover's powder, Deppy, or a few grains of quinine. Please be sensible. You're just like a child."

"What's in a Dover's powder?" demanded the patient, who had never been ill in his life.

"Ipecac and opium, sugar of milk or sulphate of potash. It's an anodyne diaphoretic," said Browne.

"Opium, eh?" came sharply from the couch. "Good Lord, an overdose of it would—" he checked the words abruptly and gave vent to a nervous fit of laughter.

"Don't be a fool, George," commanded his wife. "No one is trying to poison you."

"Who's saying that he's going to poison me?" demanded Deppingham shortly. "I'm objecting because I don't like the idea of taking medicine from a man just out of college. Now judge for yourself, Browne: would you take chances of that sort, away off here where there isn't a physician nearer than twelve hundred miles? Come now, be frank."

Bobby Browne leaned back and laughed heartily. "I

daresay you're right. I should be a bit nervous. But if we don't practise on some one, how are we to acquire proficiency? It's for the advancement of science. Lots of people have died in that service."

"By Jove, you're cold-blooded about it!" He stared helplessly at his wife's smiling face. "It's no laughing matter, Agnes. I'm a very sick man."

"Then, why not take the powders?"

"I've just given my wife a powder, old man. She's got a nervous headache," urged Browne tolerantly.

"Your wife?" exclaimed Deppingham, sitting up. "The devil!" He looked hard at Browne for a moment. "Oh, I say, now, old chap, don't you think it's rather too much of a coincidence?"

Browne arose quickly, a flash of resentment in his eyes. "See here, Deppingham——"

"Don't be annoyed, Bobby," pleaded Lady Agnes. "He's nervous. Don't mind him."

"I'm not nervous. It's the beastly chill."

"Just the same, Lady Agnes, I shall not give him a grain of anything if he persists in thinking I'm such a confounded villain as to——"

"I apologise, Browne," said Deppingham hastily. "I'm not afraid of your medicine. I'm only thinking of my wife. If I *should* happen to die, don't you know, there would be people who might say that you could have cured me. See what I mean?"

"You dear old goose," cried his wife.

"I fancy Selim or Baillo or even Bowles knows what a fellow doses himself with when he's bowled over by one of these beastly island ailments. Oblige me, Agnes, and send for Bowles."

Bowles came bowing and scraping into the room a few minutes later. He immediately recommended an old-fashioned Dover's powder and ventured the opinion that

a "good sweat" would soon put his lordship on his feet, "better than ever." Deppingham kept Bowles beside him while Browne generously prepared and administered the medicine.

Later in the night the Princess came to see how the patient was getting on. He was in a dripping perspiration.

Genevra drew a chair up beside his couch and sat down. Lady Agnes was yawning sleepily over a book.

"Do you know, I believe I'd feel better if I could have another chill," he said. "I'm so beastly hot now that I can't stand it. Aggie, why don't you turn out on the balcony for a bit of fresh air? I'm a brute to have kept you moping in here all evening."

Lady Agnes sighed prettily and—stepped out into the murky night. There were signs of an approaching storm in the sultry air.

"I say, Genevra, what's the news?" demanded his lordship.

"The latest bulletin says that you are very much improved and that you expect to pass a comfortable night."

"'Gad I *do* feel better. I'm not so stuffy. Where is Chase?"

Now, the Princess, it is most distressing to state, had wilfully avoided Mr. Chase since early that morning.

"I'm sure I don't know. I had dinner with Mrs. Browne in her room. I fancy he's off attending to the guard. I haven't seen him."

"Nice chap," remarked Deppingham. "Isn't that he now, speaking to Agnes out there?"

Genevra looked up quickly. A man's voice came in to them from the balcony, following Lady Deppingham's soft laugh.

"No," she said, settling back calmly. "It's Mr. Browne."

"Oh," said Deppingham, a slight shadow coming into his eyes. "Nice chap, too," he added a moment later.

"I don't like him," said she, lowering her voice. Deppingham was silent. Neither spoke for a long time. The low voices came to them indistinctly from the outside.

"I've no doubt Agnes is as much to blame as he," said his lordship at last. "She's made a fool of more than one man, my dear. She rather likes it."

"He's behaving like a brute. They've been married less than a year."

"I daresay I'd better call Aggie off," he mused.

"It's too late."

"Too late? The deuce——"

"I mean, too late to help Drusilla Browne. She's had an ideal shattered."

"It really doesn't amount to anything, Genevra," he argued. "It will blow over in a fortnight. Aggie's always doing this sort of thing, you know."

"I know, Deppy," she said sharply. "But this man is different. He's not a gentleman. Mr. Skaggs wasn't a gentleman. Blood tells. He will boast of this flirtation until the end of his days."

"Aggie's had dozens of men in love with her—really in love," he protested feebly. "She's not——"

"They've come and gone and she's still the same old Agnes and you're the same old Deppy. I'm not thinking of you or Aggie. It's Drusilla Browne."

"I see. Thanks for the confidence you have in Aggie. I daresay I know how Drusilla feels. I've—I've had a bad turn or two, myself, lately, and—but, never mind." He was silent for some time, evidently turning something over in his mind. "By the way, what does Chase say about it?" he asked suddenly.

She started and caught her breath. "Mr. Chase? He

—he hasn't said anything about it," she responded lamely. "He's—he's not that sort."

"Ah," reflected Deppingham, "he *is* a gentleman?"

Genevra flushed. "Yes, I'm sure he is."

"I say, Genevra," he said, looking straight into her rebellious eyes, "you're in love with Chase. Why don't you marry him?"

"You—you are really delirious, Deppy," she cried. "The fever has——"

"He's good enough for any one—even you," went on his lordship coolly.

"He may have a wife," said she, collecting her wits with rare swiftness. "Who knows? Don't be silly, Deppy."

"Rubbish! Haven't you stuffed Aggie and me full of the things you found out concerning him before he left Thorberg—and afterward? The letters from the Ambassador's wife and the glowing things your St. Petersburg friends have to say of him, eh? He comes to us well recommended by no other than the Princess Genevra, a most discriminating person. Besides, he'd give his head to marry you—having already lost it."

"You are very amusing, Deppy, when you try to be clever. Is there a clause in that silly old will compelling me to marry any one?"

"Of course not, my dear Princess; but I fancy you've got a will of your own. Where there's a will, there's a way. You'd marry him to-morrow if—if——"

"If I were not amply prepared to contest my own will?" she supplied airily.

"No. If your will was not wrapped in convention three centuries old. You won't marry Chase because you are a princess. That's the long and the short of it. It isn't your fault, either. It's born in you. I daresay it would be a mistake, after a fashion, too. You'd be

obliged to give up being a princess, and settle down as a wife. Chase wouldn't let you forget that you were a wife. It would be hanging over you all the time. Besides, he'd be a husband. That's something to beware of, too."

"Deppy, you are ranting frightfully," she said consolingly. "You should go to sleep."

"I'm awfully sorry for you, Genevra."

"Sorry for me? Dear me!"

"You're tremendously gone on him."

"Nonsense! Why, I couldn't marry Mr. Chase," she exclaimed, irritable at last. "Don't put such things into my head—I mean, don't get such things into that ridiculous old head of yours. Are you forgetting that I am to become Karl's wife in June? You are babbling, Deppy——"

"Well, let's say no more about it," he said, lying back resignedly. "It's too bad, that's all. Chase is a man. Karl isn't. You loathe him. I don't wonder that you turn pale and look frightened. Take my advice! Take Chase!"

"Don't!" she cried, a break in her voice. She arose and went swiftly toward the window. Then she stopped and turned upon him, her lips parted as if to give utterance to the thing that was stirring her heart so violently. The words would not come. She smiled plaintively and said instead: "Good-night! Get a good sleep."

"The same to you," he called feverishly.

"Deppy," she said firmly, a red spot in each cheek, her voice tense and strained to a high pitch of suppressed decision, "I shall marry Karl Brabetz. That will be the end of your Mr. Chase."

"I hope so," he said. "But I'm not so sure of it, if you continue to love him as you do now."

She went out with her cheeks burning and a frightened

stir in her heart. What right, what reason had he to say such things to her? Her thoughts raced back to Neenah's airy prophecy.

Bobby Browne and Agnes were approaching from the lower end of the balcony. She drew back into the shadow suddenly, afraid that they might discover in her flushed face the signs of that ugly blow to her pride and her self-respect. "I'm not so sure of it," was whirling in her brain, repeating itself a hundred times over, stabbing her each time in a new and even more tender spot. "If you continue to love him as you do now," fought its way through the maze of horrid, disturbing thoughts. How could she face the charge: "I'm not so sure of it," unless she killed the indictment "if you love him as you do now?"

Lady Agnes and Browne passed by without seeing her and entered the window. She heard him say something to his companion, softly, tenderly—she knew not what it was. And Lady Agnes laughed—yes, nervously. Ah, but Agnes was playing! She was not in love with this man. It was different. It was not what Neenah meant —nor Deppingham, honest friend that he was.

Down below she heard voices. She wondered—inconsistently alert—whether *he* was one of the speakers. Thomas Saunders and Miss Pelham were coming in from the terrace. They were in love with each other! They *could* be in love with each other. There was no law, no convention that said them nay! They could marry—and still love! "If you continue to love him as you do now," battered at the doors of her conscience.

Silently she stole off to her own rooms; stealthily, as if afraid of something she could not see but felt creeping up on her with an evil grin. It was Shame!

Her maid came in and she prepared for bed. Left alone, she perched herself in the window seat to cool

her heated face with the breezes that swept on ahead of the storm which was coming up from the sea. Her heart was hot; no breeze could cool it—nothing but the ice of decision could drive out the fever that possessed it. Now she was able to reason calmly with herself and her emotions. She could judge between them. Three sentences she had heard uttered that day crowded upon each other to be uppermost: not the weakest of which was one which had fallen from the lips of Hollingsworth Chase.

"It is impossible—incredible!" she was saying to herself. "I could not love him like that. I should hate him. God above me, am I not different from those women whom I have known and pitied and despised? Am I not different from Guelma von Herrick? Am I not different from Prince Henri's wife? Ah, and they loved, too! And is *he* not different from those other men—those weak, unmanly men, who came into the lives of those women? Ah, yes, yes! He *is* different."

She sat and stared out over the black sea, lighted fitfully by the distant lightning. There, she pronounced sentence upon him—and herself. There was no place for him in her world. He should feel her disdain—he should suffer for his presumption. Presumption? In what way had he offended? She put her hands to her eyes but her lips smiled—smiled with the memory of the kiss she had returned!

"What a fool! What a fool I am," she cried aloud, springing up resolutely. "I *must* forget. I told him I couldn't, but I—I can." Half way across the room she stopped, her hands clenched fiercely. "If—if Karl were only such as he!" she moaned.

She went to her dressing table and resolutely unlocked one of the drawers, as one would open a case in which the most precious of treasures was kept. A cautious, in-

"'No,' she said to herself, 'I told him I was keeping them for him'"

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voluntary glance over her shoulder, and then she ran her hand into the bottom of the drawer.

"It was so silly of me," she muttered. "I shall not keep them for him." The drawer was partly filled with cigarettes. She took one from among the rest and placed its tip in her red lips, a reckless light in her eyes. A match was struck and then her hand seemed to be in the clutch of some invisible force. The light flickered and died in her fingers. A blush suffused her face, her eyes, her neck. Then with a guilty, shamed, tender smile she dropped the cigarette into the drawer. She turned the key.

"No," she said to herself, "I told him that I was keeping them for him."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TRIAL OF VON BLITZ

THE next morning found the weather unsettled. There had been a fierce storm during the night and a nasty mist was blowing up from the sea. Deppingham kept to his room, although his cold was dissipated. For the first time in all those blistering, trying months, they felt a chill in the air; raw, wet, unexpected.

Chase had been up nearly all of the night, fearful lest the islanders should seize the opportunity to scale the walls under cover of the tempest. All through the night he had been possessed of a spirit of wild bravado, a glorious exaltation: he was keeping watch over her, standing between her and peril, guarding her while she slept. He thought of that mass of Henner hair—he loved to think of her as a creation of the fanciful Henner—he thought of her asleep and dreaming in blissful security while he, with all the loyalty of an imaginative boy, was standing guard just as he had pictured himself in those heroic days when he substituted himself for the story-book knight who stood beneath the battlements and defied the covetous ogre. His thoughts, however, did not contemplate the Princess fair in a state of wretched insomnia, with himself as the disturbing element.

He looked for her at breakfast time. They usually had their rolls and coffee together. When she did not appear, he made more than one pretext to lengthen his own stay in the breakfast-room. "She's trying to forget yesterday," he reflected. "What was it she said about always regreting? Oh, well, it's the way of women. I'll wait," he concluded with the utmost confidence in the powers of patience.

Selim came to him in the midst of his reflections, bearing a thick, rain-soaked envelope.

"It was found, excellency, inside the southern gate, and it is meant for you," said Selim. Chase gingerly slashed open the envelope with his fruit knife. He laughed ruefully as he read the simple but laborious message from Jacob von Blitz.

"*Where are your warships all this time? They are not coming to you ever. Good-bye. You got to die yet, too. Your friend, Jacob von Blitz. And my wives, too.*"

Chase stuffed the blurred, sticky letter into his pocket and arose to stretch himself.

"There's something coming to you, Jacob," he said, much to the wonder of Selim. "Selim, unless I miss my guess pretty badly, we'll be having a message—not from Garcia—but from Rasula before long. You've never heard of Garcia? Well, come along. I'll tell you something about him as we take our morning stroll. How are my cigarettes holding out?"

"They run low, sahib. Neenah has given all of hers to me for you, excellency, and I have demanded those of the wives of Von Blitz."

"Selim, you must not forget that you are a gentleman. That was most ungallant. But I suppose you got them?"

"No, sahib. They refused to give them up. They are saving them for Mr. Britt," said Selim dejectedly.

"Ah, the ficklety of women!" he sighed. "There's a new word for you, Selim—ficklety. I like it better than fickleness, don't you? Sounds like frailty, too. Was there any shooting after I went to bed?" His manner changed suddenly from the frivolous to the serious.

"No, sahib."

"I don't understand their game," he mused, a per-

plexed frown on his brow. "They've quit popping away at us."

It was far past midday when he heard from Rasula. The disagreeable weather may have been more or less responsible for the ruffling of Chase's temper during those long, dreary hours of waiting. Be that as it may, he was sorely tried by the feeling of loneliness that attached itself to him. He had seen the Princess but once, and then she was walking briskly, wrapped in a rain coat, followed by her shivering dogs, and her two Rapp-Thorberg soldiers! Somehow she failed to see Chase as he sauntered hungrily, almost imploringly across the upper terrace, in plain view. Perhaps, after all, it was not the weather.

Rasula's messenger came to the gates and announced that he had a letter for Mr. Chase. He was admitted to the grounds and conducted to the sick chamber of "the commandant." Hollingsworth Chase read the carefully worded, diplomatic letter from the native lawyer, his listeners paying the strictest attention. After the most courteous introductory, Rasula had this to say:

"We have reason to suspect that you were right in your suspicions. The golden plate has been found this day in the cave below the château, just as you have said. This much of what you have charged against Jacob von Blitz seems to be borne out by the evidence secured. Last night there was an attempt to rob the vaults in the company's bank. Again I followed your advice and laid a trap for the men engaged. They were slain in the struggle which followed. This fact is much to be deplored. Your command that these men be given a fair trial cannot be obeyed. They died fighting after we had driven them to the wall. I have to inform you, sir, that your charge against Jacob von Blitz does not hold good in the case of the bank robbery. Therefore,

I am impelled to believe that you may have unjustly accused him of being implicated in the robbery of the treasure chests. He was not among the bank thieves. There were but three of them—the Boer foremen. Jacob von Blitz came up himself and joined us in the fight against the traitors. He was merciless in his anger against them. You have said that you will testify against him. Sir, I have taken it upon myself to place him under restraint, notwithstanding his actions against the Boers. He shall have a fair trial. If it is proved that he is guilty, he shall pay the penalty. We are just people.

"Sir, we, the people of Japat, will take you at your word. We ask you to appear against the prisoner and give evidence in support of your charge. He shall be placed on trial to-morrow morning at ten o'clock. On my honour as a man and a Believer, I assure safety to you while you are among us on that occasion. You shall find that we are honourable—more honourable than the people you now serve so dearly. I, Rasula, will meet you at the gates and will conduct you back to them in safety. If you are a true man, you will not evade the call. I beg to assure you that your testimony against Jacob von Blitz shall be weighed carefully and without prejudice by those who are to act as his judges. My messenger will carry your reply to us. RASULA."

"Well, it looks as though Von Blitz has spiked your guns," said Deppingham. "The dog turns against his confederates and saves his own skin by killing them."

"In any event," said Browne, "you spoiled his little game. He loses the treasure and he didn't get into the vaults. Rasula should take those points into consideration."

"He won't forget them, rest assured. That's why I'm sure that he'll take my word at the trial as against that of Von Blitz," said Chase.

"You—you don't mean to say, Mr. Chase, that you are going into the town?" cried Lady Agnes, wide-eyed.

"Certainly, Lady Deppingham. They are expecting me."

"Don't be foolhardy, Chase. They will kill you like a rat," exclaimed Deppingham.

"Oh, no, they won't," said the other confidently. "They've given their promise through Rasula. Whatever else they may be, they hold a promise sacred. They know I'll come. If I don't, they'll know that I am a coward. You wouldn't have them think I *am* a coward, would you, Lady Deppingham?" he said, turning to look into her distressed face with his most winning smile.

The next morning he coolly set forth for the gates, scarcely thinking enough of the adventure to warrant the matter-of-fact "good-byes" that he bestowed upon those who were congregated to see him off. His heart was sore as he strode rapidly down the drive. Genevra had not come down to say farewell.

"By heaven," he muttered, strangely vexed with her, "I fancy she means it. She's bent on showing me my place. But she might have come down and wished me good luck. That was little enough for her to do. Ah, well," he sighed, putting it away from him.

As he turned into the tree-lined avenue near the gate, a slender young woman in a green and white gown arose from a seat in the shade and stepped a pace forward, opening her parasol quite leisurely as he quickened his steps. His eyes gleamed with the sudden rush of joy that filled his whole being. She stood there, waiting for him, under the trees. There was an expression in her face that he had never seen there before. She was smiling, it is true, but there was something like defiance —yes, it was the set, strained smile of resolution that

greeted his eager exclamation. Her eyes gleamed brightly and she was breathing as one who has run swiftly.

"You are determined to go down there among those men?" she demanded, the smile suddenly giving way to a look of disapproval. She ignored his hand.

"Certainly," he said, after the moment of bewilderment. "Why not? I—I thought you had made up your mind to let me go without a—a word for good luck." She found great difficulty in meeting the wistful look in his eyes. "You are good to come down here to say good-bye—and howdy do, for that matter. We're almost strangers again."

"I did not come down to say good-bye," she said, her lips trembling ever so slightly.

"I don't understand," he said.

"I am going with you into the town—as a witness," she said, and her face went pale at the thought of it. He drew back in amazement, staring at her as though he had not heard aright.

"Genevra," he cried, "you—you would do *that?*"

"Why not, Mr. Chase?" She tried to speak calmly, but she was trembling. After all, she was a slender, helpless girl—not an Amazon! "I saw and heard everything. They won't believe you unsupported. They won't harm me. They will treat me as they treat you. I have as much right to be heard against him as you. If I swear to them that what you say is true they——"

Her hand was on his arm now, trembling, eager, yet charged with fear at the prospect ahead of her. He clasped the little hand in his and quickly lifted it to his lips.

"I'm happy again," he cried. "It's all right with me now." She withdrew her hand on the instant.

"No, no! It isn't that," she said, her eyes narrowing.

"Don't misinterpret my coming here to say that I will go. It isn't because—no, it isn't that!"

He hesitated an instant, looking deep into the bewildered eyes that met his with all the honesty that dwelt in her soul. He saw that she trusted him to be fair with her.

"I was unhappy because you had forsaken me," he said gently. "You are brave—you are wonderful! But I can't take you down there. I know what will happen if they find him guilty. Good-bye, dear one. I'll come back—surely I'll come back. Thank you for sending me away happy."

"Won't you let me go with you?" she asked, after a long, penetrating look into his eyes.

"I would not take you among them for all the world. You forget. Neither of us would come back."

"Neither of us?" she said slowly.

"I wouldn't come back without you," he said quietly, earnestly. She understood. "Good-bye! Don't worry about me. I am in no danger."

"Good-bye," she said, the princess once more. "I shall pray for you—with all my soul." She gave him her hand. It was cold and lifeless. He pressed it warmly and went quickly away, leaving her standing there in the still shade of the satinwoods, looking after him with eyes that grew wider and wider with the tears that welled up from behind.

Hours went by—slow, tortuous hours in which the souls of those who watched and waited for his return were tried to the utmost. A restless, uncanny feeling prevailed: as if they were prisoners waiting in dead silence for the sickening news that the trap on the scaffold had been dropped with all that was living of a fellow-cell-mate, whom they had known and pitied for weeks.

Once there came to the ears of the watchers on the mountainside the sound of distant shouts, later, the

brief rattle of firearms. The blood of every one turned cold with apprehension; every voice was stilled, every eye wide with dread. Neenah screamed as she fled across the terrace toward the drawbridge, where Selim stood as motionless as a statue.

Luncheon-time passed, and again, as if drawn by a magnet, the entire household made its way to the front of the château.

At last Selim uttered a shout of joy. He forgot the deference due his betters and unceremoniously dashed off toward the gates, followed by Neenah, who seemed possessed of wings.

Chase was returning!

They saw him coming up the drive, his hat in his hand, his white umbrella raised above his head. He drew nearer, sauntering as carelessly as if nothing unusual lay behind him in the morning hours. The eager, joyous watchers saw him greet Selim and his fluttering wife; they saw Selim fall upon his knees, and they felt the tears rushing to their own eyes.

"Hurray!" shouted little Mr. Saunders in his excitement. Bowles and the three clerks joined him in the exhibition. Then the Persians and the Turks and the Arabs began to chatter; the servants, always cold and morose, revealed signs of unusual emotion; the white people laughed as if suddenly delivered from extreme pain. The Princess was conscious of the fact that at least five or six pairs of eyes were watching her face. She closed her lips and compelled her eyelids to obey the dictates of a resentful heart: she lowered them until they gave one the impression of indolent curiosity, even indifference. All the while, her incomprehensible heart was thumping with a rapture that knew no allegiance to royal conventions.

A few minutes later he was among them, listening with

his cool, half-satirical smile to their protestations of joy and relief, assailed by more questions than he could well answer in a day, his every expression a protest against their contention that he had done a brave and wonderful thing.

"Nonsense," he said in his most deprecating voice, taking a seat beside the Princess on the railing and fanning himself lazily with his hat to the mortification of his body-servant, who waved a huge palm leaf in vigorous adulation. "It was nothing. Just being a witness, that's all. You'll find how easy it is when you get back to London and have to testify in the Skaggs will contest. Tell the truth, that's all." The Princess was now looking at his brown face with eyes over which she had lost control. "Oh, by the by," he said, as if struck by a sudden thought. He turned toward the shady court below, where the eager refugees from Aratat were congregated. A deep, almost sepulchral tone came into his voice as he addressed himself to the veiled wives of Jacob von Blitz. "It is my painful duty to announce to the Mesdames von Blitz that they are widows."

There was a dead silence. The three women stared up at him, uncomprehending.

"Yes," he went on solemnly, "Jacob is no more. He was found guilty by his judges and executed with commendable haste and precision. I will say this for your lamented husband: he met his fate like a man and a German—without a quiver. He took his medicine bravely—twelve leaden pills administered by as many skilful surgeons. It is perhaps just as well for you that you are widows. If he had lived long enough he would have made a widower of himself." The three wives of Von Blitz hugged themselves and cried out in their joy! "But it is yet too early to congratulate yourselves on your freedom. Rasula has promised to kill all of us,

whether we deserve it or not, so I daresay we'd better postpone the celebration until we're entirely out of the woods."

"They shot him?" demanded Deppingham, when he had finished.

"Admirably. By Jove, those fellows *can* shoot! They accepted my word against his—which is most gratifying to my pride. One other man testified against him—a chap who saw him with the Boers not ten minutes before the attempt was made to rob the vaults. Rasula appeared as counsel for the defence. Merely a matter of form. He *knew* that he was guilty. There was no talk of a new trial; no appeal to the supreme court, Britt; no expense to the community."

He was as unconcerned about it as if discussing the most trivial happening of the day. Five ancient men had sat with the venerable Cadi as judges in the market-place. There were no frills, no disputes, no summing up of the case by state or defendant. The judges weighed the evidence; they used their own judgment as to the law and the penalty. They found him guilty. Von Blitz lived not ten minutes after sentence was passed.

"As to their intentions toward us," said Chase, "they are firm in their determination that no one shall leave the château alive. Rasula was quite frank with me. He is a cool devil. He calmly notified me that we will all be dead inside of two weeks. No ships will put in here so long as the plague exists. It has been cleverly managed. I asked him how we were to die and he smiled as though he was holding something back as a surprise for us. He came as near to laughing as I've ever seen him when I asked him if he'd forgotten my warships. 'Why don't you have them here?' he asked. 'We're not ready,' said I. 'The six months are not up for nine days yet.' 'No one will come ashore for you,' he said

pointedly. I told him that he was making a great mistake in the attitude he was taking toward the heirs, but he coolly informed me that it was best to eradicate all danger of the plague by destroying the germs, so to speak. He agreed with me that you have no chance in the courts, but maintains that you'll keep up the fight as long as you live, so you might just as well die to suit his convenience. I also made the interesting discovery that suits have already been brought in England to break the will on the grounds of insanity."

"But what good will that do us if we are to die here?" exclaimed Bobby Browne.

"None whatsoever," said Chase calmly. "You must admit, however, that you exhibited signs of hereditary insanity by coming here in the first place. I'm beginning to believe that there's a streak of it in my family, too."

"And you—you saw him killed?" asked the Princess in an awed voice, low and full of horror.

"Yes. I could not avoid it."

"They killed him on your—on your—" she could not complete the sentence, but shuddered expressively.

"Yes. He deserved death, Princess. I am more or less like the Moslem in one respect. I might excuse a thief or a murderer, but I have no pity for a traitor."

"You saw him killed," she said in the same awed voice, involuntarily drawing away from him.

"Yes," he said, "and you would have seen him killed, too, if you had gone down with me to appear against him."

She looked up quickly and then thanked him, almost in a whisper.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CENTURIES TO FORGET

"My lord," said Saunders the next day, appearing before his lordship after an agitated hour of preparation, "it's come to a point where something's got to be done." He got that far and then turned quite purple; his collar seemed to be choking him.

"Quite right, Saunders," said Deppingham, replacing his eyeglass nervously, "but who's going to do it and what is there to be done?"

"I'm—er—afraid you don't quite understand, sir," mumbled the little solicitor, glancing uneasily over his shoulder. "If what Mr. Chase says is true, we've got a precious short time to live. Well, we've—we've concluded to get all we can out of the time that's left, my lord."

"I see," said the other, but he did not see.

"So I've come to ask if it will be all right with you and her ladyship, sir. We don't want to do anything that would seem forward and out of place, sir."

"It's very considerate of you, Saunders; but what the devil are you talking about?"

"Haven't you heard, sir?"

"That we are to die? Certainly."

"That's not all, sir. Miss—Miss Pelham and I have decided to get—er—get married before it is too late."

Deppingham stared hard for a moment and then grinned broadly.

"You mean, before you die?"

"That's it exactly, my lord. Haw, haw! It *would* be a bit late, wouldn't it, if we waited till afterward? Haw, haw! Splendid! But seriously, my lord, we've

talked it all over and it strikes us both as a very clever thing to do. We had intended to wait till we got to London, but that seems quite out of the question now. Unless we do it up pretty sharp, sir, we are likely to miss it altogether. So I have come to ask if you think it will interfere with your arrangements if—if we should be married to-night."

"I'm sure, Saunders, that it won't discommode me in the least," said his lordship genially. "By all means, Saunders, let it be to-night, for to-morrow we may die."

"Will you kindly speak to her ladyship, sir?"

"Gladly. And I'll take it as an honour if you will permit me to give away the bride."

"Thank you, my lord," cried Saunders, his face beaming. His lordship shook hands with him, whereupon his cup of happiness overflowed, notwithstanding the fact that his honeymoon was likely to be of scarcely any duration whatsoever. "I've already engaged Mr. Bowles, sir, for half past eight, and also the banquet hall, sir," he said, with his frank assurance.

"And I'll be happy, Saunders, to see to the wedding supper and the rice," said his lordship. "Have you decided where you will go on your wedding journey?"

"Yes, sir," said Saunders seriously, "God helping us, we'll go to England."

The wedding took place that night in the little chapel. It was not an imposing celebration; neither was it attended by the gladsome revelry that usually marks the nuptial event, no matter how humble. The very fact that these two were being urged to matrimony by the uncertainties of life was sufficient to cast a spell of gloom over the guests and high contracting parties alike. The optimism of Hollingsworth Chase lightened the shadows but little.

Chase deliberately took possession of the Princess after

the hollow wedding supper had come to an end. He purposely avoided the hanging garden and kept to the vine-covered balcony overlooking the sea. Her mood had changed. Now she was quite at ease with him; the taunting gleam in her dark eyes presaged evil moments for his peace of mind.

"I'm inspired," he said to her. "A wedding always inspires me."

"It's very strange that you've never married," she retorted. She was striding freely by his side, confident in her power to resist sentiment with mockery.

"Will you be my wife?" he asked abruptly. She caught her breath before laughing tolerantly, and then looked into his eyes with a tantalising ingenuousness.

"By no means," she responded. "I am not oppressed by the same views that actuated Miss Pelham. You see, Mr. Chase, I am quite confident that we are *not* to die in two weeks."

"I could almost wish that we could die in that time," he said.

"How very diabolical!"

"It may seem odd to you, but I'd rather see you dead than married to Prince Karl." She was silent. He went on: "Would you consent to be my wife if you felt in your heart that we should never leave this island?"

"You are talking nonsense," she said lightly.

"Perhaps. But would you?" he insisted.

"I think I shall go in, Mr. Chase," she said with a warning shake of her head.

"Don't, please! I'm not asking you to marry me if we *should* leave the island. You must give me credit for that," he argued whimsically.

"Ah, I see," she said, apparently very much relieved. "You want me only with the understanding that death should be quite close at hand to relieve you. And if I

were to become your wife, here and now, and we should be taken from this dreadful place—what then?"

"You probably would have to go through a long and miserable career as plain Goodwife Chase," he explained.

"If it will make you any happier," she said, with a smile in which there lurked a touch of mischievous triumph, "I can say that I might consent to marry you if I were not so positive that I will leave the island soon. You seem to forget that my uncle's yacht is to call here, even though your cruisers will not."

"I'll risk even that," he maintained stoutly.

She stopped suddenly, her hand upon his arm.

"Do you really love me?" she demanded earnestly.

"With all my soul, I swear to you," he replied, staggered by the abrupt change in her manner.

"Then don't make it any harder for me," she said. "You know that I could not do what you ask. Please, please be fair with me. I—I can't even jest about it. It is too much to ask of me," she went on with a strange firmness in her voice. "It would require centuries to make me forget that I am a princess, just as centuries were taken up in creating me what I am. I am no better than you, dear, but—but—you understand?" She said it so pleadingly, so hopelessly that he understood what it was that she could not say to him. "We seldom if ever marry the men whom God has made for us to love."

He lifted her hands to his breast and held them there. "If you will just go on loving me, I'll some day make you forget you're a princess." She smiled and shook her head. Her hair gleamed red and bronze in the kindly light; a soft perfume came up to his nostrils.

* * * * *

The next day three of the native servants became violently ill, seized by the most appalling convulsions. At

first, a thrill of horror ran through the château. The plague! The plague in reality! Faces blanched white with dread, hearts turned cold and sank like lead; a hundred eyes looked out to sea with the last gleam of hope in their depths.

But these fears were quickly dissipated. Baillo and the other natives unhesitatingly announced that the men were not afflicted with the "fatal sickness." As if to bear out these positive assertions, the sufferers soon began to mend. By nightfall they were fairly well recovered. The mysterious seizure, however, was unexplained. Chase alone divined the cause. He brooded darkly over the prospect that suddenly had presented itself to his comprehension. Poison! He was sure of it! But who the poisoner?

All previous perils and all that the future seemed to promise were forgotten in the startling discovery that came with the fall of night. The first disclosures were succeeded by a frantic but ineffectual search throughout the grounds; the château was ransacked from top to bottom.

Lady Deppingham and Robert Browne were missing! They had disappeared as if swallowed by the earth itself!

Neenah, the wife of Selim, was the last of those in the château to see the heirs. When the sun was low in the west, she observed them strolling leisurely along the outer edge of the moat. They crossed the swift torrent by the narrow bridge at the base of the cliff and stopped below the mouth of the cavern which blew its cool breath out upon the hanging garden. Later on, she saw them climb the staunch ladder and stand in the black opening, apparently enjoying the cooling wind that came from the damp bowels of the mountain. Her attention was called elsewhere, and that was the last

glimpse she had of the two people about whom centred the struggle for untold riches.

It was not an unusual thing for the inhabitants of the château to climb to the mouth of the cavern. The men had penetrated its depths for several hundred yards, lighting their way by means of electric torches, but no one among them had undertaken the needless task of exploring it to the end. This much they knew: the cavern stretched to endless distances, wide in spots, narrow in others, treacherous yet attractive in its ugly, grave-like solitudes.

"God, Chase, they are lost in there!" groaned Deppingham, numb with apprehension. He was trembling like a leaf.

"There's just one thing to do," said Chase, "we've got to explore that cavern to the end. They may have lost their bearings and strayed off into one of the lateral passages."

"I—I can't bear the thought of her wandering about in that horrible place," Deppingham cried as he started resolutely toward the ladders.

"She'll come out of it all right," said Chase, a sudden compassion in his eyes.

Drusilla Browne was standing near by, cold and silent with dread, a set expression in her eyes. Her lips moved slowly and Deppingham heard the bitter words:

"You will find them, Lord Deppingham. You will find them!"

He stopped and passed his hand over his eyes. Then, without a word, he snatched a rifle from the hands of one of the patrol, and led the way up the ladder. As he paused at the top to await the approach of his companions, Chase turned to the white-faced Princess and said, between his teeth:

"If Skaggs and Wyckholme had been in the employ of

the devil himself they could not have foreseen the result of their infernal plotting. I am afraid—mortally afraid!"

"Take care of him, Hollingsworth," she whispered shuddering.

The last glow of sunset, reflected in the western sky, fell upon the tall figure of the Englishman in the mouth of the cavern. Tragedy seemed to be waiting to cast its mantel about him from behind.

"Good-bye, Genevra, my Princess," said Chase softly, and then was off with Britt and Selim. As he passed Drusilla, he seized her hand and paused long enough to say:

"It's all right, little woman, take my word for it. If I were you, I'd cry. You'll see things differently through your tears."

The four men, with their lights, vanished from sight a few moments later. Chase grasped Deppingham's arm and held him back, gravely suggesting that Selim should lead the way.

They were to learn the truth almost before they had fairly begun their investigations.

The heirs already were in the hands of their enemies, the islanders!

The appalling truth burst upon them with a suddenness that stunned their sensibilities for many minutes. All doubt was swept away by the revelation.

The eager searchers, shouting as they went, had picked their way down the steps in the sloping floor of the cavern, down through the winding galleries and clammy grottoes, their voices booming ever and anon against the silent walls with the roar of foghorns. Now they had come to what was known as "the Cathedral." This was a wide, lofty chamber, hung with dripping stalactites, far below the level at which they began the descent.

The floor was almost as flat and even as that of a modern dwelling. Here the cavern branched off in three or four directions, like the tentacles of a monster devilfish, the narrow passages leading no one knew whither in that tomb-like mountain.

Selim uttered the first shout of surprise and consternation. Then the four of them rushed forward, their eyes almost starting from their sockets. An instant later they were standing at the edge of a vast hole in the floor—newly made and pregnant with disaster.

A current of air swept up into their faces. The soft, loose earth about the rent in the floor was covered with the prints of naked feet; the bottom of the hole was packed down in places by a multitude of tracks. Chase's bewildered eyes were the first to discover the presence of loose, scattered masonry in the pile below and the truth dawned upon him sharply. He gave a loud exclamation and then dropped lightly into the shallow hole.

"I've got it!" he shouted, stooping to peer intently ahead. "Von Blitz's powder kegs did all this. The secret passage runs along here. One of the discharges blew this hole through the roof of the passage. Here are the walls of the passage. By heaven, the way is open to the sea!"

"My God, Chase!" cried Deppingham, staggering toward the opening. "These footprints are—God! They've murdered her! They've come in here and surprised——"

"Go easy, old man! We need to be cool now. It's all as plain as day to me. Rasula and his men were exploring the passage after the discovery of the treasure chests. They came upon this new-made hole and then crawled into the cavern. They surprised Browne and—Yes, here are the prints of a woman's shoe—and a man's, too. They're gone, God help 'em!"

He climbed out of the hole and rushed about "the Cathedral" in search of further evidence. Deppingham dropped suddenly to his knees and buried his face in his hands, sobbing like a child.

It was all made plain to the searchers. Signs of a fierce struggle were found near the entrance to the Cathedral. Bobby Browne had made a gallant fight. Blood stains marked the smooth floor and walls, and there was evidence that a body had been dragged across the chamber.

Britt put his hand over his eyes and shuddered. "They've settled this contest, Chase, forever!" he groaned.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE PURSUIT

DEPPINGHAM sprang to his feet with a fierce oath on his lips. His usually lustreless eyes were gleaming with something more than despair; there was the wild light of unmistakable relief in them. It was as if a horrid doubt had been scaled from the soul of Lady Deppingham's husband.

"We must follow!" shouted his lordship, preparing to lower himself into the jagged opening. "We may be in time!"

"Stop, Deppingham!" cried Chase, leaping to his side. "Don't rush blindly into a trap like that. Let's consider for a moment."

They had it back and forth for many minutes, the united efforts of the three men being required to keep the half-frantic Englishman from rushing alone into the passage. Reason at last prevailed.

"They've got an hour or more start of us," argued Chase. "Nothing will be accomplished by rushing into an ambush. They'd kill us like rats. Rasula is a sagacious scoundrel. He'll not take the entire responsibility. There will be a council of all the head men. It will be of no advantage to them to kill the heirs unless they are sure that *we* won't live to tell the tale. They will go slow, now that they have the chief obstacles to victory in their hands."

"If they will give her up to me, I will guarantee that Lady Agnes shall relinquish all claim to the estate," announced the harassed husband.

"They won't do that, old man. Promises won't tempt them," protested Chase. "We've got to do what we can

to rescue them. I'm with you, gentlemen, in the undertaking, first for humanity's sake; secondly, because I am your friend; lastly, because I don't want my clients to lose all chance of winning out in this controversy by acting like confounded asses. It isn't what Sir John expects of me. Now, let's consider the situation sensibly."

In the meantime, the anxious coterie in the château were waiting eagerly for the return of the searchers. Night had fallen swiftly. The Princess and Drusilla were walking restlessly back and forth, singularly quiet and constrained. The latter sighed now and then in a manner that went directly to the heart of her companion. Genevra recognised the futility of imposing her sympathies in the face of this significant reserve.

Drusilla made one remark, half unconsciously, no doubt, that rasped in the ears of the Princess for days. It was the cold, bitter, resigned epitome of the young wife's thoughts.

"Robert has loved her for months." That was all.

Mr. and Mrs. Saunders, thankful that something had happened to divert attention from their own conspicuous plight, were discoursing freely in the centre of a group composed of the four Englishmen from the bank, all of whom had deserted their posts of duty to hear the details of the amazing disappearance.

"It's a plain out and out elopement," said Mrs. Saunders, fanning herself vigorously.

"But, my dear," expostulated her husband, blushing vividly over the first public use of the appellation, "where the devil could they elope to?"

"I don't know, Tommy, but elopers never take that into consideration. Do they, Mr. Bowles?"

Mr. Bowles readjusted the little red forage cap and said he'd be hanged if he knew the eloping symptoms.

At last the four men appeared in the mouth of the cavern. The watchers below fell into chilled silence when they discovered that the missing ones were not with them. Stupefied with apprehension, they watched the men descend the ladder and cross the bridge.

"They are dead!" fell from Drusilla Browne's lips. She swayed for an instant and then sank to the ground, unconscious.

* * * * *

In the conference which followed the return of the searchers, it was settled that three of the original party should undertake the further prosecution of the hunt for the two heirs. Lord Deppingham found ready volunteers in Chase and the faithful Selim. They prepared to go out in the hills before the night was an hour older. Selim argued that the abductors would not take their prisoners to the town of Aratat. He understood them well enough to know that they fully appreciated the danger of an uprising among those who were known to be openly opposed to the high-handed operations of Rasula and his constituency. He convinced Chase that the wily Rasula would carry his captives to the mines, where he was in full power.

"You're right, Selim. If he's tried that game we'll beat him at it. Ten to one, if he hasn't already chucked them into the sea, they're now confined in one of the mills over there."

They were ready to start in a very short time. Selim carried a quantity of food and a small supply of brandy. Each was heavily armed and prepared for a stiff battle with the abductors. They were to go by way of the upper gate, taking chances on leaving the park without discovery by the sentinels.

"We seem constantly to be saying good-bye to each other." Thus spoke the Princess to Chase as he stood

at the top of the steps waiting for Selim. The darkness hid the wan, despairing smile that gave the lie to her sprightly words.

"And I'm always doing the unexpected thing—coming back. This time I may vary the monotony by failing to return."

"I should think you could vary it more pleasantly by not going away," she said. "You will be careful?"

"The danger is here, not out there," he said meaningly.

"You mean—me? But, like all danger, I soon shall pass. In a few days, I shall say good-bye forever and sail away."

"How much better it would be for you if this were the last good-bye—and I should not come back."

"For me?"

"Yes. You could marry the Prince without having me on your conscience forevermore."

"Mr. Chase!"

"It's easier to forget the dead than the living, they say."

"Don't be too sure of that."

"Ah, there's Selim! Good-bye! We'll have good news for you all, I hope, before long. Keep your eyes on Neenah. She and Selim have arranged a set of signals. Don't lie awake all night—and don't pray for me," he scoffed, in reckless mood.

The three men stole out through the small gate in the upper end of the park. Selim at once took the lead. They crept off into the black forest, keeping clear of the mountain path until they were far from the walls. It was hard going among the thickly grown, low-hanging trees. They were without lights; the jungle was wrapped in the blackness of night; the trail was unmade and arduous. For more than a mile they crept through the unbroken vegetation of the tropics, finally

making their way down to the beaten path which led past the ruins of the bungalow and up to the mountain road that provided a short cut around the volcano to the highlands overlooking the mines district in the cradle-like valley beyond.

Deppingham had not spoken since they left the park grounds. He came second in the single file that they observed, striding silently and obediently at the given twenty paces behind Selim. They kept to the grassy roadside and moved swiftly and with as little noise as possible. By this time, their eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness; they could distinguish one another quite clearly. The starlight filtered down through the leafy canopy above the road, increasing rather than decreasing the density of the shadows through which they sped. None but strong, determined, inspired men could have followed the pace set by the lithe, surefooted Selim.

Mile after mile fell behind them, with no relaxation of energy or purpose. Chase found time and opportunity to give his thoughts over to Genevra. A mighty longing to clasp her in his arms and carry her to the ends of the earth took possession of him: a longing to drag her far from the conventions which bound her to a world he could not enter into. Down in his heart, he knew that she loved him: it was not a play-day folly with her. And yet he knew that the end would be as she had said. She would be the wife of the man she did not love. Fate had given her to him when the world was young; there was no escape. In story-books, perhaps, but not in real life. And how he had come to love her!

They were coming to the ridge road and Selim fell back to explain the need for caution. The ridge road crept along the brow of the deep canyon that ran down to the sea. This was the road, in all likelihood, he ex-

plained, that the abductors would have used in their flight from the cavern. Two miles farther south it joined the wide highway that ran from Aratat to the mines.

Selim crept on ahead to reconnoitre. He was back in ten minutes with the information that a party of men had but lately passed along the road toward the south. Their footprints in the soft, untraveled road were fresh. The stub of a cigarette that had scarcely burned itself out proved to him conclusively that the smoker, at least, was not far ahead of them.

They broke away from the road and took a less exposed course through the forest to their right, keeping well within earshot of the ridge, but moving so carefully that there was slight danger of alarming the party ahead. The fact that the abductors—there seemed to be no doubt as to identity—had spent several hours longer than necessary in traversing the distance between the cave and the point just passed, proving rather conclusively that they were encumbered by living, not dead, burdens.

At last the sound of voices came to the ears of the pursuers. As they crept closer and closer, they became aware of the fact that the party had halted and were wrangling among themselves over some point in dispute. With Selim in the lead, crawling like panthers through the dense undergrowth, the trio came to the edge of the timber land. Before them lay the dark, treeless valley; almost directly below them, not fifty yards away, clustered the group of disputing islanders, a dozen men in all, with half as many flaring torches.

They had halted in the roadway at the point where a sharp defile through the rocks opened a way down into the valley. Like snakes the pursuers wriggled their

way to a point just above the small basin in which the party was congregated.

A great throb of exultation leaped up from their hearts. In plain view, at the side of the road, were the two persons for whom they were searching.

"God, luck is with us," whispered Chase unconsciously.

Lady Agnes, dishevelled, her dress half stripped from her person, was seated upon a great boulder, staring hopelessly, lifelessly at the crowd of men in the roadway. Beside her stood a tall islander, watching her and at the same time listening eagerly to the dispute that went on between his fellows. She was not bound; her hands and feet and lips were free. The glow from the torches held by gesticulating hands fell upon her tired, frightened face. Deppingham groaned aloud as he looked down upon the wretched, hopeless woman that he loved and had come out to die for.

Bobby Browne was standing near by. His hands were tightly bound behind his back. His face was blood-covered and the upper part of his body was almost bare, evidence of the struggle he had made against overwhelming odds. He was staring at the ground, his head and shoulders drooping in utter dejection.

The cause of the slow progress made by the attacking party was also apparent after a moment's survey of the situation. Three of the treasure chests were standing beside the road, affording seats for as many weary carriers. It was all quite plain to Chase. Rasula and his men had chanced upon the two white people during one of their trips to the cave for the purpose of removing the chests. Moreover, it was reasonable to assume that this lot of chests represented the last of those stored away by Von Blitz. The others had been borne away by detachments of men who left the cave before the discovery and capture of the heirs.

Rasula was haranguing the crowd of men in the road. The hidden listeners could hear and understand every word he uttered.

"It is the only way," he was shouting angrily. "We cannot take them into the town to-night—maybe not for two or three days. Some there are in Aratat who would end their lives before sunrise. I say to you that we cannot put them to death until we are sure that the others have no chance to escape to England. I am a lawyer. I know what it would mean if the story got to the ears of the government. We have them safely in our hands. The others will soon die. Then—then there can be no mistake! They must be taken to the mines and kept there until I have explained everything to the people. Part of us shall conduct them to the lower mill and the rest of us go on to the bank with these chests of gold."

In the end, after much grumbling and fierce quarrelling, in which the prisoners took little or no interest, the band was divided into two parts. Rasula and six of the sturdiest men prepared to continue the journey to Aratat, transporting the chests. Five sullen, resentful fellows moved over beside the captives and threw themselves down upon the grassy sward, lighting their cigarettes with all the philosophical indifference of men who regard themselves as put upon by others at a time when there is no alternative.

"We will wait here till day comes," growled one of them defiantly. "Why should we risk our necks going down the pass to-night? It is one o'clock. The sun will be here in three hours. Go on!"

"As you like, Abou Dal," said Rasula, shrugging his pinched shoulders. "I shall come to the mill at six o'clock." Turning to the prisoners, he bowed low and said, with a soft laugh: "Adios, my lady, and you, most noble sir. May your dreams be pleasant ones. Dream

that you are wedded and have come into the wealth of Japat, but spare none of your dream to the husband and wife, who are lying awake and weeping for the foolish ones who would go searching for the forbidden fruit. Folly is a hard road to travel and it leads to the graveyard of fools. Adios!"

Lady Agnes bent over and dropped her face into her hands. She was trembling convulsively. Browne did not show the slightest sign that he had heard the galling words.

At a single sharp command, the six men picked up the three chests and moved off rapidly down the road, Rasula striding ahead with the flaring torch.

They were barely out of sight beyond the turn in the hill when Deppingham moved as though impulse was driving him into immediate attack upon the guards who were left behind with the unhappy prisoners. Chase laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

"Wait! Plenty of time. Wait an hour. Don't spoil everything. We'll save them sure," he breathed in the other's ear. Deppingham's groan was almost loud enough to have been heard above the rustling leaves and the collective maledictions of the disgusted islanders.

The minutes slipped by with excruciating slowness. The wakeful eyes of the three watchers missed nothing that took place in the little grass-grown niche below them. They could have sprung almost into the centre of the group from the position they occupied. Utterly unconscious of the surveillance, the islanders gradually sunk into a morose, stupid silence. If the watchers hoped that they might go to sleep they were to be disappointed. Two of the men sat with their backs to the rocks, their rifles across their knees. The others sprawled lazily upon the soft grass. Two torches, stuck in the earth, threw a weird light over the scene.

Bobby Browne was now lying with his shoulder against a fallen tree-trunk, staring with unswerving gaze at the woman across the way. She was looking off into the night, steadfastly refusing to glance in his direction. For fully half an hour this almost speaking tableau presented itself to the spectators above.

Then suddenly Lady Agnes arose to her feet and lifted her hands high toward the black dome of heaven, Salammbo-like, and prayed aloud to her God, the sneering islanders looking on in silent derision.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PERSIAN ANGEL

THE man called Abou suddenly leaped to his feet, and, with the cry of an eager animal, sprang to her side. His arms closed about her slender figure with the unmistakable lust of the victor. A piteous, heart-rending shriek left her lips as he raised her clear of the ground and started toward the dense shadows across the road. Her terror-stricken face was turned to the light; her cries for mercy were directed to the brute's companions.

They did not respond, but another did. A hoarse, inarticulate cry of rage burst from Deppingham's lips. His figure shot out through the air and down the short slope with the rush of an infuriated beast. Even as the astonished Abou dropped his struggling burden to meet the attack of the unexpected deliverer, he was felled to the earth by a mighty blow from the rifle which his assailant swung swift and true. His skull was crushed as if it were an eggshell.

Lady Agnes struggled to her feet, wild-eyed, half crazed by the double assault. The next instant she fell forward upon her face, dead to all that was to follow in the next few minutes. Her glazed eyes caught a fleeting glimpse of the figures that seemed to sweep down from the sky, and then all was blank.

There was no struggle. Chase and Selim were upon the stupefied islanders before they could move, covering them with their rifles. The wretches fell upon their knees and howled for mercy. While Deppingham was holding his wife's limp form in his arms, calling out to her in the agony of fear, utterly oblivious to all else that was happening about him, his two friends were swiftly disarm-

ing the grovelling natives. Selim's knife severed the cords that bound Bobby Browne's hands; he was staring blankly, dizzily before him, and many minutes passed before he was able to comprehend that deliverance had come.

Ten minutes later Chase was addressing himself to the four islanders, who, bound and gagged, were tied by their own sashes to trees some distance from the roadside.

"I've just thought of a little service you fellows can perform for me in return for what I've done for you. All the time you're doing it, however, there will be pistols quite close to your backs. I find that Lady Deppingham is much too weak to take the five miles' walk we've got to do in the next two hours—or less. You are to have the honour of carrying her four miles and a half, and you will have to get along the best you can with the gags in your mouths. I'm rather proud of the inspiration. We were up against it, hard, until I thought of you fellows wasting your time up here in the woods. Corking scheme, isn't it? Two of you form a basket with your hands—I'll show you how. You carry her for half a mile; then the other two may have the satisfaction of doing something just as handsome for the next half mile—and so on. Great, eh?"

And it was in just that fashion that the party started off without delay in the direction of the château. Two of the cowed but eager islanders were carrying her ladyship between them, Deppingham striding close behind in a position to catch her should she again lose consciousness. Her tense fingers clung to the straining shoulders of the carriers, and, although she swayed dizzily from time to time, she maintained her trying position with extreme courage and cool-headedness. Now and then she breathed aloud the name of her husband, as if to assure herself that he was near at hand. She kept

her eyes closed tightly, apparently uniting every vestige of force in the effort to hold herself together through the last stages of the frightful ordeal which had fallen to her that night.

With Selim in the lead, the little procession moved swiftly but cautiously through the black jungle, bent on reaching the gate if possible before the night lifted. Chase and Bobby Browne brought up the rear with the two reserve carriers in hand. Browne, weak and suffering from torture and exposure, struggled bravely along, determined not to retard their progress by a single movement of indecision. He had talked volubly for the first few minutes after their rescue, but now was silent and intent upon thoughts of his own. His head and face were bruised and cut; his body was stiff and sore from the effects of his valiant battle in the cavern and the subsequent hardships of the march.

In his heart Bobby Browne was now raging against the fate that had placed him in this humiliating, almost contemptible position. He, and he alone, was responsible for the sufferings that Lady Agnes had endured: it was as gall and wormwood to him that other men had been ordained to save her from the misery that he had created. He could almost have welcomed death for himself and her rather than to have been saved by George Deppingham. As he staggered along, propelled by the resistless force which he knew to be a desire to live in spite of it all, he was wondering how he could ever hold up his head again in the presence of those who damned him, even as they had prayed for him.

His wife! He could never be the same to her. He had forfeited the trust and confidence of the one loyal believer among them all. . . . And now, Lady Deppingham loathed him because his weakness had been greater than hers!

When he would have slain the four helpless islanders with his own hands, Hollingsworth Chase had stayed his rage with the single, caustic adjuration:

"Keep out of this, Browne! You've been enough of a damned bounder without trying that sort of thing."

Tears were in Bobby Browne's eyes as, mile after mile, he blundered along at the side of his fellow-countryman, his heart bleeding itself dry through the wound those words had made.

It was still pitch dark when they came to the ridge above the park. Through the trees the lights in the château could be seen. Lady Agnes opened her eyes and cried out in tremulous joy. A great wave of exaltation swept over Hollingsworth Chase. *She* was watching and waiting there with the others!

"Dame Fortune is good to us," he said, quite irrelevantly. Selim muttered the sacred word "Allah." Chase's trend of thought, whatever it may have been, was ruthlessly checked. "That reminds me," he said briskly, "we can't waste Allah's time in dawdling here. Luck has been with us—and Allah, too—great is Allah! But we'll have to do some skilful sneaking on our own hook, just the same. If the upper gate is being watched—and I doubt it very much—we'll have a hard time getting inside the walls, signal or no signal. The first thing for us to do is to make everything nice and snug for our four friends here. You've laboured well and faithfully," he said to the panting islanders, "and I'm going to reward you. I'm going to set you free. But not yet. Don't rejoice. First, we shall tie you securely to four stout trees just off the road. Then we'll leave you to take a brief, much-needed rest. Lady Deppingham, I fancy, can walk the rest of the way through the woods. Just as soon as we are inside the walls, I'll find some way to let your friends know that you are here. You can

explain the situation to them better than I can. Tell 'em that it might have been worse."

He and Selim promptly marched the bewildered islanders into the wood. Bobby Browne, utterly exhausted, had thrown himself to the soft earth. Lady Deppingham was standing, swaying but resolute, her gaze upon the distant, friendly windows.

At last she turned to look at her husband, timorously, an appeal in her eyes that the darkness hid. He was staring at her, a stark figure in the night. After a long, tense moment of indecision, she held out her hands and he sprang forward in time to catch her as she swayed toward him. She was sobbing in his arms. Bobby Browne's heavy breathing ceased in that instant, and he closed his ears against the sound that came to them.

Deppingham gently implored her to sit down with him and rest. Together they walked a few paces farther away from their companion and sat down by the roadside. For many minutes no word was spoken; neither could whisper the words that were so hard in finding their way up from the depths. At last she said:

"I've made you unhappy. I've been so foolish. It has not been fun, either, my husband. God knows it hasn't. You do not love me now."

He did not answer her at once and she shivered fearfully in his arms. Then he kissed her brow gently.

"I *do* love you, Agnes," he said intensely. "I will answer for my own love if you can answer for yours. Are you the same Agnes that you were? My Agnes?"

"Will you believe me?"

"Yes."

"I could lie to you—God knows I would lie to you."

"I—I would rather you lied to me than to——"

"I know. Don't say it. George," as she put her hands to his face and whispered in all the fierceness of a des-

perate longing to convince him, "I am the same Agnes. I am *your* Agnes. I am! You *do* believe me?"

He crushed her close to his breast and then patted her shoulder as a father might have touched an erring child.

"That's all I ask of you," he said. She lay still and almost breathless for a long time.

At last she spoke: "It is not wholly his fault, George. I was to blame. I led him on. You understand?"

"Poor devil!" said he drily. "It's a way you have, dear."

The object of this gentle commiseration was staring with gloomy eyes at the lights below. He was saying to himself, over and over again: "If I can only make Drusie understand!"

Chase and Selim came down upon this little low-toned picture. The former paused an instant and smiled joyously in the darkness.

"Come," was all he said. Without a word the three arose and started off down the road. A few hundred feet farther on, Selim abruptly turned off among the trees. They made their way slowly, cautiously to a point scarcely a hundred feet from the wall and somewhat to the right of the small gate. Here he left them and crept stealthily away. A few minutes later he crept back to them, a soft hiss on his lips.

"Five men are near the gate," he whispered. "They watch so closely that no one may go to rescue those who have disappeared. Friends are hidden inside the wall, ready to open the gate at a signal. They have waited with Neenah all night. And day is near, sahib."

"We must attack at once," said Chase. "We can take them by surprise. No killing, mind you. They're not looking for anything to happen outside the walls. It will be easy if we are careful. No shooting unless necessary. If we should fail to surprise them, Selim and I

will dash off into the forest and they will follow us. Then, Deppingham, you and Browne get Lady Deppingham inside the gate. We'll look out for ourselves. Quiet now!"

Five shadowy figures soon were distinguished huddled close to the wall below the gate. The sense of sight had become keen during those trying hours in the darkness.

The islanders were conversing in low tones, a word or two now and then reaching the ears of the others. It was evident from what was being said, that, earlier in the evening, messengers had carried the news from Rasula to the town; the entire population was now aware of the astounding capture of the two heirs. There had been rejoicing; it was easy to picture the populace lying in wait for the expected relief party from the château.

Suddenly a blinding, mysterious light flashed upon the muttering group. As they fell back, a voice, low and firm, called out to them:

"Not a sound or you die!"

Four unwavering rifles were bearing upon the surprised islanders and four very material men were advancing from the ghostly darkness. An electric lantern shot a ray of light athwart the scene.

"Drop your guns—quick!" commanded Chase. "Don't make a row!"

Paralysed with fear and amazement, the men obeyed. They could not have done otherwise. The odds were against them; they were bewildered; they knew not how to combat what seemed to them an absolutely supernatural force.

While the three white men kept them covered with their rifles, Selim ran to the gate, uttering the shrill cry of a night bird. There was a rush of feet inside the walls, subdued exclamations, and then a glad cry.

"Quick!" called Selim. The keys rattled in the locks,

the bolts were thrown down, and an instant later, Lady Deppingham was flying across the space which intervened between her and the gate, where five or six figures were huddled and calling out eagerly for haste.

The men were beside her a moment later, possessed of the weapons of the helpless sentinels. With a crash the gates were closed and a joyous laugh rang out from the exultant throat of Hollingsworth Chase.

"By the Lord Harry, this is worth while!" he shouted. Outside, the maddened guards were sounding the tardy alarm. Chase called out to them and told them where they could find the four men in the forest. Then he turned to follow the group that had scurried off toward the château. The first grey shade of day was coming into the night.

He saw Neenah ahead of him, standing still in the centre of the gravelled path. Beyond her was the tall figure of a man.

"You are a trump, Neenah," cried Chase, hurrying up to her. "A Persian angel!"

It was not Neenah's laugh that replied. Chase gasped in amazement and then uttered a cry of joy.

The Princess Genevra, slim and erect, was standing before him, her hand touching her turban in true military salute, soft laughter rippling from her lips.

In the exuberance of joy, he clasped that little hand and crushed it against his lips.

"You!" he exclaimed.

"Sh!" she warned, "I have retained my guard of honour."

He looked beyond her and beheld the tall, soldierly figure of a Rapp-Thorberg guardsman.

"The devil!" fell involuntarily from his lips.

"Not at all. He is here to keep me from going to the devil," she cried so merrily that he laughed aloud with

her in the spirit of unbounded joy. "Come! Let us run after the others. I want to run and dance and sing."

He still held her hand as they ran swiftly down the drive, followed closely by the faithful sergeant.

"You are an angel," he said in her ear. She laughed as she looked up into his face.

"Yes—a Persian angel," she cried. "It's so much easier to run well in a Persian angel's costume," she added.

CHAPTER XXXI

A PRESCRIBED MALADY

"You are wonderful, staying out there all night watching for—us." He was about to say "me."

"How could any one sleep? Neenah found this dress for me—aren't these baggy trousers funny? She rifled the late Mr. Wyckholme's wardrobe. This costume once adorned a sultana, I'm told. It is a most priceless treasure. I wore it to-night because I was much less conspicuous as a sultana than I might have been had I gone to the wall as a princess."

"I like you best as the Princess," he said, frankly surveying her in the grey light.

"I think I like myself as the Princess, too," she said naïvely. He sighed deeply. They were quite close to the excited group on the terrace when she said: "I am very, very happy now, after the most miserable night I have ever known. I was so troubled and afraid——"

"Just because I went away for that little while? Don't forget that I am soon to go out from you for all time. How then?"

"Ah, but then I will have Paris," she cried gaily. He was puzzled by her mood—but then, why not? What could he be expected to know of the moods of royal princesses? No more than he could know of their loves.

Lady Deppingham was got to bed at once. The Princess, more thrilled by excitement than she ever had been in her life, attended her friend. In the sanctity of her chamber, the exhausted young Englishwoman bared her soul to this wise, sympathetic young woman in Persian vestment.

"Genevra," she said solemnly, in the end, "take warn-

ing from my example. When you once are married, don't trifle with other men—not even if you shouldn't love your husband. Sooner or later you'd get tripped up. It doesn't pay, my dear. I never realised until to-night how much I really care for Deppy and I am horribly afraid that I've lost something I can never recover. I've made him unhappy and—and—all that. Can you tell me what it is that made me—but never mind! I'm going to be good."

"You were not in love with Mr. Browne. That is why I can't understand you, Agnes."

"My dear, I don't understand myself. How can I expect you or my husband to understand me? How could I expect it of Bobby Browne? Oh, dear; oh, dear, how tired I am! I think I shall never move out of this bed again. What a horrible, horrible time I've had." She sat up suddenly and stared wide-eyed before her, looking upon phantoms that came out of the hours just gone.

"Hush, dear! Lie down and go to sleep. You will feel better in a little while." Lady Agnes abruptly turned to her with a light in her eyes that checked the kindly impulses.

"Genevra, you are in love—madly in love with Hollingsworth Chase. Take my advice: marry him. He's one man in a—" Genevra placed her hand over the lips of the feverish young woman.

"I will not listen to anything more about Mr. Chase," she said firmly. "I am tired—tired to death of being told that I should marry him."

"But you love him," Lady Agnes managed to mumble, despite the gentle impediment.

"I *do* love him, yes, I do love him," cried the Princess, casting reserve to the winds. "He knows it—every one knows it. But marry him? No—no—no! I shall

marry Karl. My father, my mother, my grandfather, have said so—and I have said it, too. And his father and grandfather and a dozen great grandparents have ordained that he shall marry a princess and I a prince. That ends it, Agnes! Don't speak of it again." She cast herself down upon the side of the bed and clenched her hands in the fierceness of despair and—decision.

After a moment, Lady Agnes said dreamily: "I climbed up the ladder to make a 'ladyship' of myself by marriage and I find I love my husband. I daresay if you should go down the ladder a few rounds, my dear, you might be as lucky. But take my advice, if you *won't* marry Hollingsworth Chase, don't let him come to Paris."

The Princess Genevra lifted her face instantly, a startled expression in her eyes.

"Agnes, you forget yourself!"

"My dear," murmured Lady Agnes sleepily, "forgive me, but I have such a shockingly absent mind." She was asleep a moment later.

In the meantime, Bobby Browne, disdaining all commands and entreaties, refused to be put to bed until he had related the story of their capture and the subsequent events that made the night memorable. He talked rapidly, feverishly, as if every particle of energy was necessary to the task of justifying himself in some measure for the night's mishap. He sat with his rigid arm about his wife's shoulders. Drusilla was stroking one of his hands in a half-conscious manner, her eyes staring past his face toward the dark forest from which he had come. Mr. Britt was ordering brandy and wine for his trembling client.

"After all," said Browne, hoarse with nervousness, "there is some good to be derived from our experiences, hard as it may be to believe. I have found out the means by which Rasula intends to destroy every living creature

in the château." He made this statement at the close of the brief, spasmodic recital covering the events of the night. Every one drew nearer. Chase threw off his spell of languidness and looked hard at the speaker. "Rasula coolly asked me, at one of our resting places, if there had been any symptoms of poisoning among us. I mentioned Pong and the servants. The devil laughed gleefully in my face and told me that it was but the beginning. I tell you, Chase, we can't escape the diabolical scheme he has arranged. We are all to be poisoned—I don't see how we can avoid it if we stay here much longer. It is to be a case of slow death by the most insidious scheme of poisoning imaginable, or, on the other hand, death by starvation and thirst. The water that comes to us from the springs up there in the hills is to be poisoned by those devils."

There were exclamations of unbelief, followed by the sharp realisation that he was, after all, pronouncing doom upon each and every one of those who listened.

"Rasula knows that we have no means of securing water except from the springs. Several days ago his men dumped a great quantity of some sort of poison into the stream—a poison that is used in washing or polishing the rubies, whatever it is. Well, that put the idea into his head. He is going about it shrewdly, systematically. I heard him giving instructions to one of his lieutenants. He thought I was still unconscious from a blow I received when I tried to interfere in behalf of Lady Agnes, who was being roughly dragged along the mountain road. Day and night a detachment of men are to be employed at the springs, deliberately engaged in the attempt to change the flow of pure water into a slow, subtle, deadly poison, the effects of which will not be immediately fatal, but positively so in the course of a few days. Every drop of water that we drink or use

in any way will be polluted with this deadly cyanide. It's only a question of time. In the end we shall sicken and die as with the scourge. They will call it the plague!"

A shudder of horror swept through the crowd. Every one looked into his neighbour's face with a profound inquiring light in his eyes, seeking for the first evidence of approaching death.

Hollingsworth Chase uttered a short, scornful laugh as he unconcernedly lifted a match to one of his precious cigarettes. The others stared at him in amazement. He had been exceedingly thoughtful and preoccupied up to that moment.

"Great God, Chase!" groaned Browne. "Is this a joke?"

"Yes—and it's on Rasula," said the other laconically.

"But even now, man, they are introducing this poison into our systems——"

"You say that Rasula isn't aware of the fact that you overheard what he said to his man? Then, even now, in spite of your escape, he believes that we may go on drinking the water without in the least suspecting what it has in store for us. Good! That's why I say the joke is on him."

"But, my God, we must have water to drink," cried Britt. Mrs. Saunders alone divined the thought that filled Chase's mind. She clapped her hands and cried out wonderingly:

"I know! I—I took depositions in a poisoning case two years ago. Why, of course!"

"Browne, you are a doctor—a chemist," said Chase calmly, first bestowing a fine smile upon the eager Mrs. Saunders. "Well, we'll distil and double and triple distil the water. That's all. A schoolboy might have thought of that. It's all right, old man. You're fagged out; your brain isn't working well. Don't look

so crestfallen. Mr. Britt, you and Mr. Saunders will give immediate instructions that no more water is to be drunk—or used—until Mr. Browne has had a few hours' rest. He can take an alcohol bath and we can all drink wine. It won't hurt us. At ten o'clock sharp Dr. Browne will begin operating the distilling apparatus in the laboratory. As a matter of fact, I learned somewhere—at college, I imagine—that practically pure water may be isolated from wine." He arose painfully and stretched himself. "I think I'll get a little much-needed rest. Do the same, Browne—and have a rub down. By Jove, will you listen to the row my clients are making out there in the woods! They seem to be annoyed over something."

Outside the walls the islanders were shouting and calling to each other; rifles were cracking, far and near, voicing, in their peculiarly spiteful way, the rage that reigned supreme.

As Chase ascended the steps Bobby Browne and his wife came up beside him.

"Chase," said Browne, in a low voice, his face turned away to hide the mortification that filled his soul, "you are a man! I want you to know that I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"Never mind, old man! Say no more," interrupted Chase, suddenly embarrassed.

"I've been a fool, Chase. I don't deserve the friendship of any one—not even that of my wife. It's all over, though. You understand? I'm not a coward. I'll do anything you say—take any risk—to pay for the trouble I've caused you all. Send me out to fight——"

"Nonsense! Your wife needs you, Browne. Don't you, Mrs. Browne? There, now! It will be all right, just as I said. I daresay, Browne, that I wouldn't have been above the folly that got the better of you. Only—" he

hesitated for a minute—"only, it couldn't have happened to me if I had a wife as dear and as good and as pretty as the one you have."

Browne was silent for a long time, his arm still about Drusilla's shoulder. At the end of the long hall he said with decision in his voice:

"Chase, you may tell your clients that so far as I am concerned they may have the beastly island and everything that goes with it. I'm through with it all. I shall discharge Britt and——"

"My dear boy, it's most magnanimous of you," cried Chase merrily. "But I'm afraid you can't decide the question in such an off-hand, *dégagé* manner. Sleep over it. I've come to the conclusion that it isn't so much of a puzzle as to how you are to *get* the island as how to get *off* of it. Take good care of him, Mrs. Browne. Don't let him talk."

She held out her hand to him impulsively. There was an unfathomable, unreadable look in her dark eyes. As he gallantly lifted the cold fingers to his lips, she said, without taking her almost hungry gaze from his face:

"Thank you, Mr. Chase. I shall never forget you."

He stood there looking after them as they went up the stairway, a puzzled expression in his face. After a moment he shook his head and smiled vaguely as he said to himself:

"I guess he'll be a good boy from now on." But he wondered what it was that he had seen or felt in her sombre gaze.

In fifteen minutes he was sound asleep in his room, his long frame relaxed, his hands wide open in utter fatigue. He dreamed of a Henner girl with Genevra's brilliant face instead of the vague, greenish features that haunt the vision with their subtle mysticism.

He was awakened at noon by Selim, who obeyed his

instructions to the minute. The eager Arab rubbed the soreness and stiffness out of his master's body with copious applications of alcohol.

"I'm sorry you awoke me, Selim," said the master enigmatically. Selim drew back, dismayed. "You drove her away." Selim's eyes blinked with bewilderment. "I'm afraid she'll never come back."

"Excellency!" trembled on the lips of the mystified servant.

"Ah, me!" sighed the master resignedly. "She smiled so divinely. Henner girls never smile, do they, Selim? Have you noticed that they are always pensive? Perhaps you haven't. It doesn't matter. But this one smiled. I say," coming back to earth, "have they begun to distil the water? I've got a frightful thirst."

"Yes, excellency. The Sahib Browne is at work. One of the servants became sick to-day. Now no one is drinking the water. Baillo is bringing in ice from the storehouses and melting it, but the supply is not large. Sahib Browne will not let them make any more ice at present." Nothing more was said until Chase was ready for his rolls and coffee. Then Selim asked hesitatingly, "Excellency, what is a bounder? Mr. Browne says——"

"I believe I did call him a bounder," interrupted Chase reminiscently. "I spoke hastily and I'll give him a chance to demand an explanation. He'll want it, because he's an American. A bounder, Selim? Well," closing one eye and looking out of the window calculatingly, "a bounder is a fellow who keeps up an acquaintance with you by persistently dunning you for money that you've owed to him for four or five years. Any one who annoys you is a bounder."

Selim turned this over in his mind for some time, but the puzzled air did not lift from his face.

"Excellency, you will take Selim to live with you in

Paris?" he said after a while wistfully. "I will be your slave."

"Paris? Who the dickens said anything about Paris?" demanded Chase, startled.

"Neenah says you will go there to live, sahib."

"Um—um," mused Chase; "what does she know about it?"

"Does not the most glorious Princess live in Paris?"

"Selim, you've been listening to gossip. It's a frightful habit to get into. Put cotton in your ears. But if I were to take you, what would become of little Neenah?"

"Oh, Neenah?" said Selim easily. "If she would be a trouble to you, excellency, I can sell her to a man I know."

Chase looked blackly at the eager Arab, who quailed.

"You miserable dog!"

Selim gasped. "Excellency!"

"Don't you love her?"

"Yes, yes, sahib—yes! But if she would be a trouble to you—no!" protested the Arab anxiously. Chase laughed as he came to appreciate the sacrifice his servant would make for him.

"I'll take you with me, Selim, wherever I go—and if I go—but, my lad, we'll take Neenah along, too, to save trouble. She's not for sale, my good Selim." The husband of Neenah radiated joy.

"Then she may yet be the slave of the most glorious Princess! Allah is great! The most glorious one has asked her if she will not come with her——"

"Selim," commanded the master ominously, "don't repeat the gossip you pick up when I'm not around."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE TWO WORLDS

Two days and nights crept slowly into the past, and now the white people of the château had come to the eve of their last day's stay on the island of Japat: the probationary period would expire with the sun on the following day, the anniversary of the death of Taswell Skaggs. The six months set aside by the testator as sufficient for all the requirements of Cupid were to come to an inglorious end at seven o'clock on March 29th. According to the will, if Agnes Ruthven and Robert Browne were not married to each other before the close of that day all of their rights in the estate were lost to them.

To-morrow would be the last day of residence required, but, alack! Was it to be the last that they were to spend in the world-forsaken land? As they sat and stared gloomily at the spotless sea there was not a single optimist among them who felt that the end was near. Not a few were convincing themselves that their last days literally would be spent on the island.

No later than that morning a steamer—a small Dutch freighter—had come to a stop off the harbour. But it turned tail and fled within an hour. No one came ashore; the malevolent tug went out and turned back the landing party which was ready to leave the ship's side. The watchers in the château knew what it was that the tug's captain shouted through his trumpet at a safe distance from the steamer. Through their glasses they saw the boat's crew scramble back to the deck of the freighter; the action told the story plainer than words.

The black and yellow flags at the end of the company's pier lent colour to a grewsome story!

The hopeless look deepened in the eyes of the watchers. They saw the steamer move out to sea and then scuttle away as if pursued by demons.

Hollingsworth Chase alone maintained a stubborn air of confidence and unconcern. He may not have felt as he looked, but something in his manner, assumed or real, kept the fires of hope alight in the breasts of all the others.

"Don't be downhearted, Bowles," he said to the moping British agent. "You'll soon be managing the bank again and patronising the American bar with the same old regularity."

"My word, Mr. Chase," groaned Bowles, "how can you say a thing like that? I daresay they've blown the bank to Jericho by this time. Besides, there won't be an American bar. And, moreover, I don't intend to stay a minute longer than I have to on the beastly island. This taste of the old high life has spoiled me for everything else. I'm going back to London and sit on the banks of the Serpentine until it goes dry. Stay here? I should rather say not."

There had been several vicious assaults upon the gates by the infuriated islanders during the day following the rescue of the heirs. Their rage and disappointment knew no bounds. For hours they acted like madmen; only the most determined resistance drove them back from the gates. Some powerful influence suddenly exerted itself to restore them to a state of calmness. They abruptly gave up the fruitless, insensate attacks upon the walls and withdrew to the town, apparently defeated. The cause was obvious: Rasula had convinced them that Death already was lifting his hand to blot out the lives of those who opposed them.

Bobby Browne was accomplishing wonders in the laboratory. He seldom was seen outside the distilling room;

his assiduity was marked, if not commented upon. Hour after hour he stood watch over the water that went up in vapour and returned to the crystal liquid that was more precious than rubies and sapphires. He was redeeming himself, just as he was redeeming the water from the poison that had made it useless. He experimented with lizards: the water as it came from the springs brought quick death to the little reptiles. The fishes in the aquarium died before it occurred to any one to remove them from the noxious water.

Drusilla kept close to his side during all of these operations. She seemed afraid or ashamed to join the others; she avoided Lady Deppingham as completely as possible. Her effort to be friendly when they were thrown together was almost pitiable.

As for Lady Agnes, she seemed stricken by an unconquerable lassitude; the spirits that had controlled her voice, her look, her movements, were sadly missing. It was with a most transparent effort that she managed to infuse life into her conversation. There were times when she stood staring out over the sea with unseeing eyes, and one knew that she was not thinking of the ocean. More than once Genevra had caught her watching Deppingham with eyes that spoke volumes, though they were mute and wistful.

From time to time the sentinels brought to Lord Deppingham and Chase missives that had been tossed over the walls by the emissaries of Rasula. They were written by the leader himself and in every instance expressed the deepest sympathy for the plague-ridden château. It was evident that Rasula believed that the occupants were slowly but surely dying, and that it was but a question of a few days until the place would become a charnel-house. With atavic cunning he sat upon the outside and waited for the triumph of death.

"There's a paucity of real news in these gentle messages that annoys me," Chase said, after reading aloud the last of the epistles to the Princess and the Deppinghams. "I rejoice in my heart that he isn't aware of the true state of affairs. He doesn't appreciate the real calamity that confronts us. The Plague? Poison? Mere piffle. If he only knew that I am now smoking my last—*the* last cigarette on the place!" There was something so inconceivably droll in the lamentation that his hearers laughed despite their uneasiness.

"I believe you would die more certainly from lack of cigarettes than from an over-abundance of poison," said Genevra. She was thinking of the stock she had hoarded up for him in her dressing-table drawer, under lock and key. It occurred to her that she could have no end of housewifely thrills if she doled them out to him in niggardly quantities, at stated times, instead of turning them over to him in profligate abundance.

"I'm sure I don't know," he said, taking a short inhalation. "I've never had the poison habit."

"I say, Chase, can't you just see Rasula's face when he learns that we've been drinking the water all along and haven't passed away?" cried Deppingham, brightening considerably in contemplation of the enemy's disgust.

"And to think, Mr. Chase, we once called you 'the Enemy,'" said Lady Agnes in a low, dreamy voice. There was a far-away look in her eyes.

"I appear to have outlived my usefulness in that respect," he said. He tossed the stub of his cigarette over the balcony rail. "Good-bye!" he said, with melancholy emphasis. Then he bent an inquiring look upon the face of the Princess.

"Yes," she said, as if he had asked the question aloud. "You shall have three a day, that's all."

"You'll leave the entire fortune to me when you sail away, I trust," he said. The Deppinghams were puzzled.

"But you also will be sailing away," she argued.

"I? You forget that I have had no orders to return. Sir John expects me to stay. At least, so I've heard in a roundabout way."

"You don't mean to say, Chase, that you'll stay on this demmed island if the chance comes to get away," demanded Lord Deppingham earnestly. The two women were looking at him in amazement.

"Why not? I'm an ally, not a deserter."

"You are a madman!" cried Lady Agnes. "Stay here? They would kill you in a jiffy. Absurd!"

"Not after they've had another good long look at my warships, Lady Deppingham," he replied, with a most reassuring smile.

"Good Lord, Chase, you're not clinging to that corpse-candle straw, are you?" cried his lordship, beginning to pace the floor. "Don't be a fool! We can't leave you here to the mercy of these brutes. What's more, we won't!"

"My dear fellow," said Chase ruefully, "we are talking as though the ship had already dropped anchor out there. The chances are that we will have ample time to discuss the ethics of my rather anomalous position before we say good-bye to each other. I think I'll take a stroll along the wall before turning in."

He arose and leisurely started to go indoors. The Princess called to him, and he paused.

"Wait," she said, coming up to him. They walked down the hallway together. "I will run upstairs and unlock the treasure chest. I do not trust even my maid. You shall have two to-night—no more."

"You've really saved them for me?" he queried, a note of eagerness in his voice. "All these days?"

"I have been your miser," she said lightly, and then ran lightly up the stairs.

He looked after her until she disappeared at the top with a quick, shy glance over her shoulder. Then he permitted his spirits to drop suddenly from the altitude to which he had driven them. An expression of utter dejection came into his face; a haggard look replaced the buoyant smile.

"God, how I love her—how I love her!" he groaned, half aloud.

She was coming down the stairs now, eager, flushed, more abashed than she would have had him know. Without a word she placed the two cigarettes in his outstretched palm. Her eyes were shining.

In silence he clasped her hand and led her unresisting through the window and out upon the broad gallery. She was returning the fervid pressure of his fingers, warm and electric. They crossed slowly to the rail. Two chairs stood close together. They sat down, side by side. The power of speech seemed to have left them altogether.

He laid the two cigarettes on the broad stone rail. She followed the movement with perturbed eyes, and then leaned forward and placed her elbows on the rail. With her chin in her hands, she looked out over the sombre park, her heart beating violently. After a long time she heard him saying hoarsely:

"If the ship should come to-morrow, you would go out of my life? You would go away and leave me here——"

"No, no!" she cried, turning upon him suddenly. "You *could* not stay here. You shall not!"

"But, dearest love, I am bound to stay—I cannot go And, God help me, I want to stay. If I could go into your world and take you unto myself forever—if you

will tell me now that some day you may forget your world and come to live in mine—then, ah, then, it would be different! But without you I have no choice of abiding place. Here, as well as anywhere."

She put her hands over her eyes.

"I cannot bear the thought of—of leaving you behind—of leaving you here to die at the hands of those beasts down there. Hollingsworth, I implore you—come! If the opportunity comes—and it will, I know—you will leave the island with the rest of us?"

"Not unless I am commanded to do so by the man who sent me here to serve these beasts, as you call them."

"They do not want you! They are your enemies!"

"Time will tell," he said sententiously. He leaned over and took her hand in his. "You do love me?"

"You know I do—yes, yes!" she cried from her heart, keeping her face resolutely turned away from him. "I am sick with love for you. Why should I deny the thing that speaks so loudly for itself—my heart! Listen! Can you not hear it beating? It is hurting me—yes, it is hurting me!"

He trembled at this exhibition of released, unchecked passion, and yet he did not clasp her in his arms.

"Will you come into my world, Genevra?" he whispered. "All my life would be spent in guarding the love you would give to me—all my life given to making you love me more and more until there will be no other world for you to think of."

"I wish that I had not been born," she sobbed. "I cannot, dearest—I cannot change the laws of fate. I am fated—I am doomed to live forever in the dreary world of my fathers. But how can I give you up? How can I give up your love? How can I cast you out of my life?"

"You do not love Prince Karl?"

"How can you ask?" she cried fiercely. "Am I not loving you with all my heart and soul?"

"And you would leave me behind if the ship should come?" he persisted, with cruel insistence. "You will go back and marry that—him? Loving me, you will marry him?" Her head dropped upon her arm. He turned cold as death. "God help and God pity you, my love. I never knew before what your little world means to you. I give you up to it. I crawl back into the one you look down upon with scorn. I shall not again ask you to descend to the world where love is."

Her hand lay limp in his. They stared bleakly out into the night and no word was spoken.

The minutes became an hour, and yet they sat there with set faces, bursting hearts, unseeing eyes.

Below them in the shadows, Bobby Browne was pacing the embankment, his wife drawn close to his side. Three men, Britt, Saunders and Bowles, were smoking their pipes on the edge of the terrace. Their words came up to the two in the gallery.

"If I have to die to-morrow," Saunders, the bridegroom, was saying, with real feeling in his voice, "I should say, with all my heart, that my life has been less than a week long. The rest of it was nothing. I never was happy before—and happiness is everything."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE SHIPS THAT PASS

THE next morning was rainy. A quick, violent storm had rushed up from the sea during the night.

Chase, after a sleepless night, came down and, without waiting for his breakfast, hurried out upon the gallery overlooking the harbour. Genevra was there before him, pale, wistful, heavy-eyed—standing in the shelter of a huge pilaster. The wind swept the thin, swishing raindrops across the gallery on both sides of her position. He came up from behind. She was startled by the sound of his voice saying "good-morning."

"Hollingsworth," she said drearily, "do you believe he will come to-day?"

"He?" he asked, puzzled.

"My uncle. The yacht was to call for me not later than to-day."

"I remember," he said slowly. "It may come, Genevra. The day is young."

She clasped his hand convulsively, a desperate revolt in her soul.

"I almost hope that it may not come for me!" she said, her voice shaking with suppressed emotion.

"I am not so selfish as to wish that, dear one," he said, after a moment of inconceivable ecstasy in which his own longing gave the lie to the words which followed.

"It will not come. I feel it in my heart. We shall die here together, Hollingsworth. Ah, in that way I may escape the other life. No, no! What am I saying? Of course I want to leave this dreadful island—this dreadful, beautiful, hateful, happy island. Am I not too

silly?" She was speaking rapidly, almost hysterically, a nervous, flickering smile on her face.

"Dear one," he said gently, "the yacht will come. If it should not come to-day, my cruisers will forestall its mission. As sure as there is a sea, those cruisers will come." She looked into his eyes intently, as if afraid of something there. "Oh, I'm not mad!" he laughed. "You brought a cruiser to me one day; I'll bring one to you in return. We'll be quits."

"Quits?" she murmured, hurt by the word.

"Forgive me," he said, humbled.

"Hollingsworth," she said, after a long, tense scrutiny of the sea, "how long will you remain on this island?"

"Perhaps until I die—if death should come soon. If not, then God knows how long."

"Listen to me," she said intensely. "For my sake, you will not stay long. You will come away before they kill you. You will! Promise me. You will come—to Paris? Some day, dear heart? Promise!"

He stared at her beseeching face in wide-eyed amazement. A wave of triumphant joy shot through him an instant later. To Paris! She was asking him—but then he understood! Despair was the inspiration of that hungry cry. She did not mean—no, no!

"To Paris?" he said, shaking his head sadly. "No, dearest one. Not now. Listen: I have in my bag upstairs an offer from a great American corporation. I am asked to assume the management of its entire business in France. My headquarters would be in Paris. My duties would begin as soon as my contract with Sir John Brodney expires. The position is a lucrative one; it presents unlimited opportunities. I am a comparatively poor man. The letter was forwarded to me by Sir John. I have a year in which to decide."

"And you—you will decline?" she asked.

"Yes. I shall go back to America, where there are no princesses of the royal blood. Paris is no place for the disappointed, cast-off lover. I can't go there. I love you too madly. I'd go on loving you, and you—good as you are, would go on loving me. There is no telling what would come of it. It will be hard for me to—to stay away from Paris—desperately hard. Sometimes I feel that I will not be strong enough to do it, Genevra."

"But Paris is huge, Hollingsworth," she argued, insistently, an eager, impelling light in her eyes. "We would be as far apart as if the ocean were between us."

"Ah, but would we?" he demanded.

"It is almost unheard-of for an American to gain *entrée* to our—to the set in which—well, you understand," she said, blushing painfully in the consciousness that she was touching his pride. He smiled sadly.

"My dear, you will do me the honour to remember that I am not trying to get into your set. I am trying to induce you to come into mine. You won't be tempted, so that's the end of it. Beastly day, isn't it?" He uttered the trite commonplace as if no other thought than that of the weather had been in his mind. "By the way," he resumed, with a most genial smile, "for some queer, unmasculine reason, I took it into my head last night to worry about the bride's trousseau. How are you going to manage it if you are unable to leave the island until—well, say June?"

She returned his smile with one as sweetly detached as his had been, catching his spirit. "So good of you to worry," she said, a defiant red in her cheeks. "You forget that I have a postponed trousseau at home. A few stitches here and there, an alteration or two, some smart summer gowns and hats — Oh, it will be so simple. What is it? What do you see?"

He was looking eagerly, intently toward the long, low headland beyond the town of Aratat.

"The smoke! See? Close in shore, too! By heaven, Genevra—there's a steamer off there. She's a small one or she wouldn't run in so close. It—it may be the yacht! Wait! We'll soon see. She'll pass the point in a few minutes."

Scarcely breathing in their agitation, they kept the glasses levelled steadily, impatiently upon the distant point of land. The smoke grew thicker and nearer. Already the citizens of the town were rushing to the pier. Even before the vessel turned the point, the watchers at the château witnessed a most amazing performance on the dock. Half a hundred natives dropped down as if stricken, scattering themselves along the narrow pier. For many minutes Chase was puzzled, bewildered by this strange demonstration. Then, the explanation came to him like a flash.

The people were simulating death! They were posing as the victims of the plague that infested the land! Chase shuddered at this exhibition of diabolical cunning. Some of them were writhing as if in the death agony. It was at once apparent that the effect of this manifestation would serve to drive away all visitors, appalled and terrified. As he was explaining the ruse to his mystified companion, the nose of the vessel came out from behind the tree-covered point.

An instant later, they were sending wild cries of joy through the château, and people were rushing toward them from all quarters.

The trim white thing that glided across the harbour, graceful as a bird, was the Marquess's yacht!

It is needless to describe the joyous gale that swept the château into a maelstrom of emotions. Every one was shouting and talking and laughing at once; every one

was calling out excitedly that no means should be spared in the effort to let the yacht know and appreciate the real situation.

"Can the yacht take all of us away?" was the anxious cry that went round and round.

They saw the tug put out to meet the small boat; they witnessed the same old manœuvres; they sustained a chill of surprise and despair when the bright, white and blue boat from the yacht came to a stop at the command from the tug.

There was an hour of parleying. The beleaguered ones signalled with despairing energy; the flag, limp in the damp air above the château, shot up and down in pitiful eagerness.

But the small boat edged away from close proximity to the tug and the near-by dock. They spoke each other at long and ever-widening range. At last, the yacht's boat turned and fled toward the trim white hull.

Almost before the startled, dazed people on the balcony could grasp the full and horrible truth, the yacht had lifted anchor and was slowly headed out to sea.

It was unbelievable!

With stupefied, incredulous eyes, they saw the vessel get quickly under way. She steamed from the pest-ridden harbour with scarcely so much as a glance behind. Then they shouted and screamed after her, almost maddened by this final, convincing proof of the consummate deviltry against which they were destined to struggle.

Chase looked grimly about him, into the questioning, stricken faces of his companions. He drew his hand across his moist forehead.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said seriously and without the faintest intent to jest, "we are supposed to be dead!"

There was a single shriek from the bride of Thomas Saunders; no sound left the dry lips of the other

watchers, who stood as if petrified and kept their eyes glued upon the disappearing yacht.

"They have left me here to die!" came from the stiffened lips of the Princess Genevra. "They have deserted me. God in heaven!"

"Look!" cried Chase, pointing to the dock. Half a dozen glasses were turned in that direction.

The dying and the dead were leaping about in the wildest exhibition of gleeful triumph!

The yacht slipped into the unreachable horizon, the feathery cloud from its stack lying over against the leaden sky, shaped like a finger that pointed mockingly the way to safety.

White-faced and despairing, the watchers turned away and dragged themselves into the splendid halls of the building they had now come to regard as their tomb. Their voices were hushed and tremulous; they were looking at the handwriting on the wall. They had not noticed it there before.

Saunders was bravely saying to his distracted wife, as he led her down the marble hall:

"Don't give up the ship, dear. My word for it, we'll live to see that garden out Hammersmith way. My word for it, dear."

"He's trying so hard to be brave," said Genevra, oppressed by the knowledge that it was *her* ship that had played them false. "And Agnes? Look, Hollingsworth! She is herself again. Ah, these British women come up under the lash, don't they?"

Lady Deppingham had thrown off her hopeless, despondent air; she was crying out words of cheer and encouragement to those about her. Her eyes were flashing, her head was erect and her voice was rich with inspiration.

"And you?" asked Chase, after a moment. "What of

you? Your ship has come and gone and you are still here —with me. You almost wished for this."

"No. I almost wished that it would *not* come. There is a distinction," she said bitterly. "It has come and it has disappointed all of us—not one alone."

"Do you remember what it was that Saunders said about having lived only a week, all told? The rest was nothing."

"Yes—but you have seen that Saunders still covets life in a garden at Hammersmith Bridge. I am no less human than Mr. Saunders."

All day long the islanders rejoiced. Their shouts could be plainly heard by the besieged; their rifles cracked sarcastic greetings from the forest; bullets whistled gay accompaniments to the ceaseless song: "Allah is great! Allah is good!"

No man in the despised house of Taswell Skaggs slept that night. The guard was doubled at all points open to attack. It was well that the precaution was taken, for the islanders, believing that the enemy's force had been largely reduced by the polluted water, made a vicious assault on the lower gates. There was a fierce exchange of shots and the attackers drew away, amazed, stunned by the discovery that the beleaguered band was as strong and as determined as ever.

At two in the morning, Deppingham, Browne and Chase came up from the walls for coffee and an hour's rest.

"Chase, if you don't get your blooming cruiser here before long, we'll be as little worth the saving as old man Skaggs, up there in his open-work grave," Deppingham was saying as he threw himself wearily into a chair in the breakfast room. They were wet and cold. They had heard Rasula's minions shouting derisively all night long: "Where is the warship? Where is the warship?"

"It will come. I am positive," said Chase, insistent in

spite of his dejection. They drank their coffee in silence. He knew that the others—including the native who served them—were regarding him with the pity that one extends to the vain-glorious braggart who goes down with flying colours.

He went out upon the west gallery and paced its wind-swept length for half an hour or more. Then, utterly fagged, he threw himself into an unexposed chair and stared through tired eyes into the inscrutable night that hid the sea from view. The faithless, moaning, jeering sea!

When he aroused himself with a start, the grey, drizzly dawn was upon him. He had slept. His limbs were stiff and sore; his face was drenched by the fine rain that had searched him out with prankish glee.

The next instant he was on his feet, clutching the stone balustrade with a grip of iron, his eyes starting from his head. A shout arose to his lips, but he lacked the power to give it voice. For many minutes he stood there, rooted to the spot, a song of thanksgiving surging in his heart.

He looked about him at last. He was alone in the gallery. A quaint smile grew in his face; his eyes were bright and full of triumph. After a full minute of preparation, he made his way toward the breakfast room, outwardly as calm as a May morning.

Browne and Deppingham were asleep in the chairs. He shook them vigorously. As they awoke and stared uncomprehendingly at the disturber of their dreams, he said, in the coolest, most matter-of-fact way:

"There's an American cruiser outside the harbour. Get up!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN THE SAME GRAVE WITH SKAGGS

Down in the village of Aratat there were signs of a vast commotion. Early risers and the guards were flying from house to house, shouting the news. The citizens piled from their couches and raced pell-mell into the streets, unbelieving, demoralised. With one accord they rushed to the water front—men, women and children. Consternation was succeeded by utter panic. Rasula's wild shouts went unheeded. He screamed and fought to secure order among his people, but his efforts were as nought against the storm of terror that confronted him.

Outside the harbour lay the low, savage-looking ship. Its guns were pointed directly at the helpless town; its decks were swarming with white-clothed men; it was alive and it glowered with rage in its evil eyes.

The plague was forgotten! The strategy that had driven off the ships of peace was lost in the face of this ugly creature of war. No man grovelled on the dock with the convulsions of death; no man hearkened to the bitter, impotent words of the single wise man among them. Rasula's reign of strategy was ended.

Howling like a madman, he tried to drive the company's tug out to meet the sailors and urge them to keep away from the pest-ridden island. It was like pleading with a mountain avalanche.

"They will not fire! They dare not!" he was shrieking, as he dashed back and forth along the dock. "It is chance! They do not come for Chase! Believe in me! The tug! The tug! They must not land!" But others were raging even more wildly than he, and they were calling upon Allah for help, for mercy; they were shrieking maledic-

tions upon themselves and screaming praises to the sinister thing of death that glowered upon them from its spaceless lair.

The crash of the long-unused six-pounder at the château, followed almost immediately by a great roar from one of the cruiser's guns, brought the panic to a crisis.

The islanders scattered like chaff before the wind, looking wild-eyed over their shoulders in dread of the pursuing cannon-ball, dodging in and out among the houses and off into the foothills.

Rasula, undaunted but crazed with disappointment, stuck to his colours on the deserted dock. He cursed and raved and begged. In time, two or three of the more canny, realising that safety lay in an early peace offering, ventured out beside him. Others followed their example and still others slunk trembling to the fore, their voices ready to protest innocence and friendship and loyalty.

They had heard of the merciless American gunner and they knew, in their souls, that he could shoot the island into atoms before nightfall.

The native lawyer harangued them and cursed them and at last brought them to understand, in a feeble way, that no harm could come to them if they faced the situation boldly. The Americans would not land on British soil; it would precipitate war with England. They would not dare to attempt a bombardment: Chase was a liar, a mountebank, a dog! After shouting himself hoarse in his frenzy of despair, he finally succeeded in forcing the men to get up steam in the company's tug.

All this time, the officers of the American warship were dividing their attention between land and sea. Another vessel was coming up out of the misty horizon. The men on board knew it to be a British man-of-war!

At *last steam was* up in the tug. A hundred or more

of the islanders had ventured from their hiding places and were again huddled upon the dock.

Suddenly the throng separated as if by magic, opening a narrow path down which three white men approached the startled Rasula. A hundred eager hands were extended, a hundred voices cried out for mercy, a hundred Mohammedans beat their heads in abject submission.

Hollingsworth Chase, Lord Deppingham and a familiar figure in an ill-fitting red jacket and forage cap strode firmly, defiantly between the rows of humble Japatites. Close behind them came a tall, resolute grenadier of the Rapp-Thorberg army.

"Make way there, make way!" Mr. Bowles was crying, brandishing the antique broadsword that had come down to Wyckholme from the dark ages. "Stand aside for the British Government! Make way for the American!"

Rasula's jaw hung limp in the face of this amazing exhibition of courage on the part of the enemy. He could not at first believe his eyes. Hoarse, inarticulate cries came from his froth-covered lips. He was glaring insanely at the calm, triumphant face of the man from Brodney's, who was now advancing upon him with the assurance of a conqueror.

"You see, Rasula, I have called for the cruiser and it has come at my bidding." Turning to the crowd that surged up from behind, cowed and cringing, Chase said: "It rests with you. If I give the word, that ship will blow you from the face of the earth. I am your friend, people. I would you no harm, but good. You have been misled by Rasula. Rasula, you are not a fool. You can save yourself, even now. I am here as the servant of these people, not as their master. I intend to remain here until I am called back by the man who sent me to you. You have——"

Rasula uttered a shriek of rage. He had been cro[illegible]

ing back among his cohorts, panting with fury. Now he sprang forward, murder in his eyes. His arm was raised and a great pistol was levelled at the breast of the man who faced him so coolly, so confidently. Deppingham shouted and took a step forward to divert the aim of the frenzied lawyer.

A revolver cracked behind the tall American and Rasula stopped in his tracks. There was a great hole in his forehead; his eyes were bursting; he staggered backward, his knees gave way; and, as the blood filled the hole and streamed down his face, he sank to the ground—dead!

The soldier from Rapp-Thorberg, a smoking pistol in his hand, the other raised to his helmet, stepped to the side of Hollingsworth Chase.

"By order of Her Serene Highness, sir," he said quietly.

"Good God!" gasped Chase, passing his hand across his brow. For a full minute there was no sound to be heard on the pier except the lapping of the waves. Deppingham, repressing a shudder, addressed the stunned natives.

"Take the body away. May that be the end of all assassins!"

* * * * *

The *King's Own* came alongside the American vessel in less than an hour. Accompanied by the British agent, Mr. Bowles, Chase and Deppingham left the dock in the company's tug and steamed out toward the two monsters. The American had made no move to send men ashore, nor had the British agent deemed it wise to ask aid of the Yankees in view of the fact that a vessel of his own nation was approaching.

Standing on the forward deck of the swift little tug, Chase unconcernedly accounted for the timely arrival of the two cruisers.

"Three weeks ago I sent out letters by the mail steamer, to be delivered to the English or American commanders, wherever they might be found. Undoubtedly they were met with in the same port. That is why I was so positive that help would come, sooner or later. It was very simple, Lord Deppingham, merely a case of foresightedness. I knew that we'd need help and I knew that if I brought the cruisers my power over these people would never be disturbed again."

"My word!" exclaimed the admiring Bowles.

"Chase, you may be theatric, but you are the most dependable chap the world has ever known," said Deppingham, and he meant it.

The warships remained off the harbour all that day. Officers from both ships were landed and escorted to the château, where joy reigned supreme, notwithstanding the fact that the grandchildren of the old men of the island were morally certain that their cause was lost. The British captain undertook to straighten out matters on the island. He consented to leave a small detachment of marines in the town to protect Chase and the bank, and he promised the head men of the village, whom he had brought aboard the ship, that no mercy would be shown if he or the American captain was compelled to make a second visit in response to a call for aid. To a man the islanders pledged fealty to the cause of peace and justice: they shouted the names of Chase and Allah in the same breath, and demanded of the latter that He preserve the former's beard for all eternity.

The *King's Own* was to convey the liberated heirs, their goods and chattels, their servants and their penates (if any were left inviolate) to Aden, whither the cruiser was bound. At that port a P. & O. steamer would pick them up. One white man elected to stay on the island with Hollingsworth Chase, who steadfastly refused to

desert his post until Sir John Brodney indicated that his mission was completed. That one man was the wearer of the red jacket, the bearer of the King's commission in Japat, the undaunted Mr. Bowles, won over from his desire to sit once more on the banks of the Serpentine and to dine forever in the Old Cheshire Cheese.

The Princess Genevra, the wistful light deepening hourly in her blue-grey eyes, avoided being alone with the man whom she was leaving behind. She had made up her mind to accept the fate inevitable; he had reconciled himself to the ending of an impossible dream. There was nothing more to say, except farewell. She may have bled in her soul for him and for the happiness that was dying as the minutes crept on to the hour of parting, but she carefully, deliberately concealed the wounds from all those who stood by and questioned with their eyes.

She was a princess of Rapp-Thorberg!

The last day dawned. The sun smiled down upon them. The soft breeze of the sea whispered the curse of destiny into their ears; it crooned the song of heritage; it called her back to the fastnesses where love may not venture in.

The château was in a state of upheaval; the exodus was beginning. Servants and luggage had departed on their way to the dock. Palanquins were waiting to carry the lords and ladies of the castle down to the sea. The Princess waited until the last moment. She went to him. He was standing apart from the rest, coldly indifferent to the pangs he was suffering.

"I shall love you always," she said simply, giving him her hand. "Always, Hollingsworth." Her eyes were wide and hopeless, her lips were white.

He bowed his head. "May God give you all the happiness that I wish for you," he said. "The End!"

She looked steadily into his eyes for a long time,

searching his soul for the hope that never dies. Then she gently withdrew her hands and stood away from him, humbled in her own soul.

"Yes," she whispered. "Good-bye."

He straightened his shoulders and drew a deep breath through compressed nostrils. "Good-bye! God bless you," was all that he said.

She left him standing there; the wall between them was too high, too impregnable for even Love to storm.

Lady Deppingham came to him there a moment later. "I am sorry," she said tenderly. "Is there no hope?"

"There is no hope—for *her!*" he said bitterly. "She was condemned too long ago."

On the pier they said good-bye to him. He was laughing as gaily and as blithely as if the world held no sorrows in all its mighty grasp.

"I'll look you up in London," he said to the Deppinghams. "Remember, the real trial is yet to come. Good-bye, Browne. Good-bye, all! You *may* come again another day!"

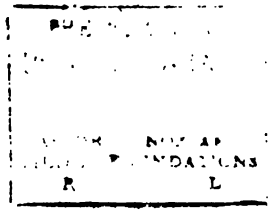
The launch slipped away from the pier. He and Bowles stood there, side by side, pale-faced but smiling, waving their handkerchiefs. He felt that Genevra was still looking into his eyes, even when the launch crept up under the walls of the distant ship.

Slowly the great vessel got under way. The American cruiser was already low on the horizon. There was a single shot from the *King's Own:* a reverberating farewell!

Hollingsworth Chase turned away at last. There were tears in his eyes and there were tears in those of Mr. Bowles.

"Bowles," said he, "it's a rotten shame they didn't think to say good-bye to old man Skaggs. He's in the same grave with us."

"He felt that Genevra was still looking into his eyes"



CHAPTER XXXV

A TOAST TO THE PAST

THE middle of June found the Deppinghams leaving London once more, but this time not on a voyage into the mysterious South Seas. They no longer were interested in the island of Japat, except as a reminiscence, nor were they concerned in the vagaries of Taswell Skaggs's will.

The estate was settled—closed!

Mr. Saunders was mentioned nowadays only in narrative form, and but rarely in that way. True, they had promised to visit the little place in Hammersmith if they happened to be passing by, and they had graciously admitted that it would give them much pleasure to meet his good mother.

Two months have passed since the Deppinghams departed from Japat, "for good and all." Many events have come to pass since that memorable day, not the least of which was the exchanging of £500,000 sterling, less attorneys' and executors' fees. To be perfectly explicit and as brief as possible, Lady Deppingham and Robert Browne divided that amount of money and passed into legal history as the "late claimants to the Estate of Taswell Skaggs."

It was Sir John Brodney's enterprise. He saw the way out of the difficulty and he acted as pathfinder to the other and less perceiving counsellors, all of whom had looked forward to an endless controversy.

The business of the Japat Company and all that it entailed was transferred by agreement to a syndicate of Jews!

Never before was there such a stupendous deal in futures.

Soon after the arrival in England of the two claimants, it became known that the syndicate was casting longing eyes upon the far-away garden of rubies and sapphires. There was no hope of escape from a long, bitter contest in the courts. Sir John perhaps saw that there was a possible chance to break the will of the testator; he was an old man and he would hardly live long enough to fight the case to the end. In the interregnum, his clients, the industrious islanders, would be slaving themselves into a hale old age and a subsequently unhallowed grave, none the wiser and none the richer than when the contest began, except for the proportionately insignificant share that was theirs by right of original possession. Sir John took it upon himself to settle the matter while his clients were still in a condition to appreciate the results. He proposed a compromise.

It was not so much a question of jurisprudence, he argued, as it was a matter of self-protection for all sides to the controversy—more particularly that side which assembled the inhabitants of Japat.

And so it came to pass that the Jews, after modifying some twenty or thirty propositions of their own, ultimately assumed the credit of evolving the plan that had originated in the resourceful head of Sir John Brodney, and affairs were soon brought to a close.

The grandchildren of the testators were ready to accept the best settlement that could be obtained. Theirs was a rather forlorn hope, to begin with. When it was proposed that Agnes Deppingham and Robert Browne should accept £250,000 apiece in lieu of all claims, moral or legal, against the estate, they leaped at the chance.

They had seen but little of each other since landing in England, except as they were thrown together at the conferences. There was no pretence of intimacy on either side; the shadow of the past was still there to re-

mind them that a skeleton lurked behind and grinned spitefully in its obscurity. Lady Agnes went in for every diversion imaginable; for a wonder, she dragged Deppingham with her on all occasions. It was a most unexpected transformation; their friends were puzzled. The rumour went about town that she was in love with her husband.

As for Bobby Browne, he was devotion itself to Drusilla. They sailed for New York within three days after the settlement was effected, ignoring the enticements of a London season—which could not have mattered much to them, however, as Drusilla emphatically refused to wear the sort of gowns that Englishwomen wear when they sit in the stalls. Besides, she preferred the Boston dressmakers. The Brownes were rich. He could now become a fashionable specialist. They were worth nearly a million and a quarter in American dollars. Moreover, they, as well as the Deppinghams, were the possessors of rubies and sapphires that had been thrust upon them by supplicating adversaries in the hour of departure—gems that might have bought a dozen wives in the capitals of Persia; perhaps a score in the mountains where the Kurds are cheaper. The Brownes naturally were eager to get back to Boston. They now had nothing in common with Taswell Skaggs; Skaggs is not a pretty name.

Mr. Britt afterward spent three weeks of incessant travel on the continent and an additional seven days at sea. In Baden-Baden he happened upon Lord and Lady Deppingham. It will be recalled that in Japat they had always professed an unholy aversion for Mr. Britt. Is it cause for wonder then that they declined his invitation to dine in Baden-Baden? He even proposed to invite their entire party, which included a few dukes and duchesses who were leisurely on their way to attend the

long-talked-of nuptials in Thorberg at the end of June.

The Syndicate, after buying off the hereditary forces, assumed a half interest in the Japat Company's business; the islanders controlled the remaining half. The mines were to be operated under the management of the Jews and eight hours were to constitute a day's work. The personal estate passed into the hands of the islanders, from whom Skaggs had appropriated it in conjunction with John Wyckholme. All in all, it seemed a fair settlement of the difficulty. The Jews paid something like £2,000,000 sterling to the islanders in consideration of a twenty years' grant. Their experts had examined the property before the death of Mr. Skaggs; they were not investing blindly in the great undertaking.

Mr. Levistein, the president of the combine, after a long talk with Lord Deppingham, expressed the belief that the château could be turned into a money-making hotel if properly advertised—outside of the island. Deppingham admitted, that if he kept the prices up, there was no reason in the world why the better class of Jews should not flock there for the winter.

Before the end of June, representatives of the combine, attended by officers of the court, a small army of clerks, a half dozen lawyers and two capable men from the office of Sir John Brodney, set sail for Japat, provided with the power and the means to effect the transfer agreed upon in the compromise.

In Vienna the Deppinghams were joined by the Duchess of N——, the Marchioness of B—— and other fashionables. In a week all of them would be in the Castle at Thorberg, for the ceremony that now occupied the attention of social and royal Europe.

"And to think," said the Duchess, "she might have died happily on that miserable island. I am sure we did all

we could to bring it about by steaming away from the place with the plague chasing after us. Dear me, how diabolically those wretches lied to the Marquess. They said that every one in the château was dead, Lady Deppingham—and buried, if I am not mistaken."

The party was dining with one of the Prince Lichtensteins in the Hotel Bristol after a drive in the Haupt-Allee.

"My dog, I think, was the only one of us who died, Duchess," said Lady Agnes airily. "And he was buried. They were that near to the truth."

"It would be much better for poor Genevra if she were to be buried instead of married next week," lamented the Duchess.

"My dear, how ridiculous. She isn't dead yet, by any manner of means. Why bury her? She's got plenty of life left in her, as Karl Brabetz will learn before long." Thus spoke the far-sighted Marchioness, aunt of the bride-to-be. "It's terribly gruesome to speak of burying people before they are actually dead."

"Other women have married princes and got on very well," said Prince Lichtenstein.

"Oh, come now, Prince," put in Lord Deppingham, "you know the sort of chap Brabetz is. There are princes and princes, by Jove."

"He's positively vile!" exclaimed the Duchess, who would not mince words.

"She's entering upon a hell of a—I mean a life of hell," exploded the Duke, banging the table with his fist. "That fellow Brabetz is the rottenest thing in Europe. He's gone from bad to worse so swiftly that public opinion is still months behind him."

"Nice way to talk of the groom," said the host genially. "I quite agree with you, however. I cannot understand

the Grand Duke permitting it to go on—unless, of course, it's too late to interfere."

"Poor dear, she'll never know what it is to be loved and cherished," said the Marchioness dolefully.

Lord and Lady Deppingham glanced at each other. They were thinking of the man who stood on the dock at Aratat when the *King's Own* sailed away.

"The Grand Duke is probably saying the very thing to himself that Brabetz's associates are saying in public," ventured a young Austrian count.

"What is that, pray?"

"That the Prince won't live more than six months. He's a physical wreck to-day—and a nervous one, too. Take my word for it, he will be a creeping, imbecile thing inside of half a year. Locomotor ataxia and all that. It's coming, positively, with a sharp crash."

"I've heard he has tried to kill that woman in Paris half a dozen times," remarked one of the women, taking it as a matter of course that every one knew who she meant by "that woman." As no one even so much as looked askance, it is to be presumed that every one knew.

"She was really responsible for the postponement of the wedding in December, I'm told. Of course, I don't know that it is true," said the Marchioness, wisely qualifying her gossip. "My brother, the Grand Duke, does not confide in me."

"Oh, I think that story was an exaggeration," said her husband. "Genevra says that he was very ill—nervous something or other."

"Probably true, too. He's a wreck. She will be the prettiest widow in Europe before Christmas," said the young count. "Unless, of course, any one of the excellent husbands surrounding me should die," he added gallantly.

"Well, my heart bleeds for her," said Deppingham.

"She's going into it with her eyes open," said the Prince. "It isn't as if she hadn't been told. She could see for herself. She knows there's the other woman in Paris and— Oh, well, why should we make a funeral of it? Let's do our best to be revellers, not mourners. She'll live to fall in love with some other man. They always do. Every woman has to love at least once in her life—if she lives long enough. Come, come! Is my entertainment to develop into a premature wake? Let us forget the future of the Princess Genevra and drink to her present!"

"And to her past, if you don't mind, Prince!" amended Lord Deppingham, looking into his wife's sombre eyes.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE TITLE CLEAR

Two men and a woman stood in the evening glow, looking out over the tranquil sea that crept up and licked the foot of the cliff. At their back rose the thick, tropical forest; at its edge and on the nape of the cliff stood a bungalow, fresh from the hands of a hundred willing toilsmen. Below, on their right, lay the gaudy village, lolling in the heat of the summer's day. Far off to the north, across the lowlands and beyond the sweep of undulating and ever-lengthening hills, could be seen a great, reddish structure, its gables and towers fusing with the sombre shades of the mountain against which they seemed to lean.

It was September. Five months had passed since the *King's Own* steamed away from the harbour of Aratat. The new dispensation was in full effect. During the long, sickening weeks that preceded the coming of the Syndicate, Hollingsworth Chase toiled faithfully, resolutely for the restoration of order and system among the demoralised people of Japat.

The first few weeks of rehabilitation were hard ones: the islanders were ready to accede to everything he proposed, but their submissiveness was due in no small measure to the respect they entertained for his almost supernatural powers. In course of time this feeling was more or less dissipated and a condition of true confidence took its place. The lawless element—including the misguided husbands whose jealousy had been so skilfully worked upon by Rasula and Jacob von Blitz—this element, greatly in the minority, subsided into a lackadaisical, law-abiding activity, with little prospect of again at-

tempting to exercise themselves in another direction. Murder had gone out of their hearts.

Eager hands set to work to construct a suitable home for the tall arbiter. He chose a position on the point that ran out into the sea beyond the town. It was this point which the yacht was rounding on that memorable day when he and one other had watched it from the gallery, stirred by emotions they were never to forget. Besides, the cliff on which the new bungalow stood represented the extreme western extremity of the island and therefore was nearest of all Japat to civilisation and—Genevra.

Conditions in Aratat were not much changed from what they had been prior to the event of the legatory invaders. The mines were in full operation; the bank was being conducted as of yore; the people were happy and confident; the town was fattening on its own flesh; the sun was as merciless and the moon as gentle as in the days of old.

The American bar changed hands with the arrival of the new forces from the Occident; the Jews and the English clerks, the surveyors and the engineers, the solicitors and the agents, were now domiciled in "headquarters." Chase turned over the "bar" when he retired from active service under Sir John Brodney. With the transfer of the company's business his work was finished. Two young men from Sir John's were now settled in Aratat as legal advisers to the islanders, Chase having declined to serve longer in that capacity.

He was now waiting for the steamer which was to take him to Cape Town on his way to England—and home.

The château was closed and in the hands of a small army of caretakers. The three widows of Jacob von Blitz were now married to separate and distinct husbands, all of

whom retained their places as heads of departments at the château, proving that courtship had not been confined to the white people during the closing days of the siege.

The head of the bank was Oscar Arnheimer, Mr. Bowles having been deposed because his methods were even more obsolete than his coat of armour. Selim disposed of his lawful interest in the corporation to Ben Ali, the new Cadi, and was waiting to accompany his master to America. It may be well to add that the deal did not include the transfer of Neenah. She was not for sale, said Selim to Ben Ali.

It was of Mr. Bowles that the three persons were talking as they stood in the evening glow.

"Yes, Selim," said the tall man in flannels, "he's a sort of old dog Tray—ever faithful but not the right kind. You don't happen to know anything of old dog Tray, do you? No? I thought not. Nor you, Neenah? Well, he was——"

"Was he the one who was poisoned at the château, excellency?" asked Neenah timidly.

"No, my dear," he replied soberly. "If I remember my history, he died in the seventeenth century or thereabouts. It's really of no consequence, however. Any good, faithful dog will serve my purpose. What I want to impress upon you is this: it is most difficult for a faithful old dog to survive a change of masters. It isn't human nature—or dog nature, either. I'm glad that you are convinced, Neenah—but please don't tell Sahib Bowles that he is a dog."

"Oh, no, excellency!" she cried earnestly.

"She is very close-mouthed, sahib," added Selim, with conviction.

"We'll take Bowles to England with us next week," went on Chase dreamily. "We'll leave Japat to take

care of itself. I don't know which it is in most danger of, seismic or Semitic disturbances."

He lighted a fresh cigarette, tenderly fingering it before applying the match.

"I'll smoke one of hers to-night, Selim. See! I keep them apart from the others, in this little gold case. I smoke them only when I am thinking. Now, run in and tell Mr. Bowles that I said he was a Tray. I want to be alone."

They left him and he threw himself upon the green sod, his back to a tree, his face toward the distant château. Hours afterward the faithful Selim came out to tell him that it was bedtime. He found his master still sitting there, looking across the moonlit flat in the direction of a place in the hills where once he had dwelt in marble halls.

"Selim," he said, arising and laying his hand upon his servant's shoulder, his voice unsteady with finality, "I have decided, after all, to go to Paris! We will live there, Selim. Do you understand?" with strange fierceness, a great exultation mastering him. "We are to live in Paris!"

To himself, all that night, he was saying: "I *must* see her again—I *shall* see her!"

A thousand times he had read and re-read the letter that Lady Deppingham had written to him just before the ceremony in the cathedral at Thorberg. He knew every word that it contained; he could read it in the dark. She had said that Genevra was going into a hell that no hereafter could surpass in horrors! And that was ages ago, it seemed to him. Genevra had been a wife for nearly three months—the wife of a man she loathed; she was calling in her heart for him to come to her; she was suffering in that unspeakable hell. All this he had come to feel and shudder over in his unspeakable loneliness.

He would go to her! There could be no wrong in loving her, in being near her, in standing by her in those hours of desperation.

A copy of a London newspaper, stuffed away in the recesses of his trunk, dated June 29th, had come to him by post. It contained the telegraphic details of the brilliant wedding in Thorberg. He had read the names of the guests over and over again with a bitterness that knew no bounds. Those very names proved to him that her world was not his, nor ever could be. Every royal family in Europe was represented; the list of noble names seemed endless to him—the flower of the world's aristocracy. How he hated them!

The next morning Selim aroused him from his fitful sleep, bringing the news that a strange vessel had arrived off Aratat. Chase sprang out of bed, possessed of the wild hope that the opportunity to leave the island had come sooner than he had expected. He rushed out upon his veranda, overlooking the little harbour.

A long, white, graceful craft was lying in the harbour. It was in so close to the pier that he had no choice but to recognise it as a vessel of light draft. He stared long and intently at the trim craft.

"Can I be dreaming?" he muttered, passing his hand over his eyes. "Don't lie to me, Selim! Is it really there?" Then he uttered a loud cry of joy and started off down the slope with the speed of a race horse, shouting in the frenzy of an uncontrollable glee.

It was the Marquess of B——'s white and blue yacht!

* * * * *

Three weeks later, Hollingsworth Chase stepped from the deck of the yacht to the pier in Marseilles; the next day he was in Paris, attended by the bewildered and almost useless Selim. An old and valued friend, a cam-

paigner of the war-time days, met him at the Gare de Lyon in response to a telegram.

"I'll tell you the whole story of Japat, Arch, but not until to-morrow," Chase said to him as they drove toward the Ritz. "I arrived yesterday on the Marquess of B——'s yacht—the *Cricket*. Do you know him? Of course you do. Everybody does. The *Cricket* was cruising down my way and picked me up—Bowles and me. The captain came a bit out of his way to call at Aratat, but he had orders of some sort from the Marquess, by cable, I fancy, to stop off for me."

He did not regard it as necessary to tell his correspondent friend that the *Cricket* had sailed from Marseilles with but one port in view—Aratat. He did not tell him that the *Cricket* had come with a message to him and that he was answering it in person, as it was intended that he should—a message written six weeks before his arrival in France. There were many things that Chase did not explain to Archibald James.

"You're looking fine, Chase, old man. Did you a lot of good out there. You're as brown as that Arab in the taximetre back there. By Jove, old man, that Persian girl is ripping. You say she's his wife? She's—" Chase broke in upon this far from original estimate of the picturesque Neenah.

"I say, Arch, there's something I want to know before I go to the Marquess's this evening. I'm due there with my thanks. He lives in the Boulevard St. Germain —I've got the number all right. Is one likely to find the house full of swells? I'm a bit of a savage just now and I'm correspondingly timid."

His friend stared at him for a moment.

"I can save you the trouble of going to the Marquess," he said. "He and the Marchioness are in London at present. Left Paris a month ago."

"What? The house is closed?" in deep anxiety.

"I think not. Servants are all there, I daresay. Their place adjoins the Brabetz palace. The Princess is his niece, you know."

"You say the Brabetz palace is next door?" demanded Chase, steadying his voice with an effort.

"Yes—the old Flaurebert mansion. The Princess was to have been the social sensation of Paris this year. She's a wonderful beauty, you know."

"Was to have been?"

"She married that rotten Brabetz last June—but, of course, you never heard of it out there in what's-the-name-of-the-place. You may have heard of his murder, however. His mistress shot him in Brussels——"

"Great God, man!" gasped Chase, clutching his arm in a grip of iron.

"The devil, Chase!" cried the other, amazed. "What's the matter?"

"He's dead? Murdered? How—when? Tell me about it," cried Chase, his agitation so great that James looked at him in wonder.

" 'Gad, you seem to be interested!"

"I *am!* Where is she—I mean the Princess? And the other woman?"

"Cool off, old man. People are staring at you. It's not a long story. Brabetz was shot three weeks ago at a hotel in Brussels. He'd been living there for two months, more or less, with the woman. In fact, he left Paris almost immediately after he was married to the Princess Genevra. The gossip is that she wouldn't live with him. She'd found out what sort of a dog he was. They didn't have a honeymoon and they didn't attempt a bridal tour. Somehow, they kept the scandal out of the papers. Well, he hiked out of Paris at the end of a week, just before the 14th. The police had asked

the woman to leave town. He followed. Dope fiend, they say. The bride went into seclusion at once. She's never to be seen anywhere. The woman shot him through the head and then took a fine dose of poison. They tried to save her life, but couldn't. It was a ripping news story. The prominence of the——"

"This was a month ago?" demanded Chase, trying to fix something in his mind. "Then it was *after* the yacht left Marseilles with orders to pick me up at Aratat."

"What are you talking about? Sure it was, if the yacht left Marseilles six weeks ago. What's that got to do with it?"

"Nothing. Don't mind me, Arch. I'm a bit upset."

"There was talk of a divorce almost before the wedding bells ceased ringing. The Grand Duke got his eyes opened when it was too late. He repented of the marriage. The Princess was obliged to live in Paris for a certain length of time before applying to the courts for freedom. 'Gad, I'll stake my head she's happy these days!"

Chase was silent for a long time. He was quite cool and composed when at last he turned to his friend.

"Arch, do me a great favour. Look out for Selim and Neenah. Take 'em to the hotel and see that they get settled. I'll join you this evening. Don't ask questions, but put me down here. I'll take another cab. There's a good fellow. I'll explain soon. I'm—I'm going somewhere and I'm in a hurry."

* * * * *

The *voiture* drew up before the historic old palace in the Boulevard St. Germain. Chase's heart was beating furiously as he stepped to the curb. The *cocher* leaned forward for instructions. His fare hesitated for a moment, swayed by a momentary indecision.

"*Attendre,*" he said finally. The driver adjusted his

register and settled back to wait. Then Chase mounted the steps and lifted the knocker with trembling fingers. He was dizzy with eagerness, cold with uncertainty.

She had asked him to come to her—but conditions were not the same as when she sent the compelling message. There had come into her life a vital break, a change that altered everything. What was it to mean to him?

He stood a moment later in the salon of the old Flaurebert palace, vaguely conscious that the room was darkened by the drawn blinds, and that it was cool and sweet to his senses. He knew that she was coming down the broad hallway—he could hear the rustle of her gown. Inconsequently he was wondering whether she would be dressed in black. Then, to his humiliation, he remembered that he was wearing uncouth, travel-soiled garments.

She was dressed in white—a house gown, simple and alluring. There was no suggestion of the coronet, no shadow of grief in her manner as she came swiftly toward him, her hands extended, a glad light in her eyes.

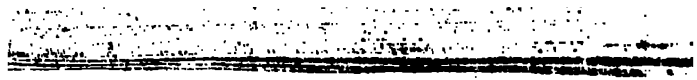
The tall man, voiceless with emotion, clasped her hands in his and looked down into the smiling, rapturous face.

"You came!" she said, almost in a whisper.

"Yes. I could not have stayed away. I have just heard that you—you are free. You must not expect me to offer condolences. It would be sheer hypocrisy. I am glad—God, I am glad! You sent for me—you sent the yacht, Genevra, before—before you were free. I came, knowing that you belonged to another. I find you the same as when I knew you first—when I held you in my arms and heard you say that you loved me. You do not grieve—you do not mourn. You are the same—my Genevra—the same that I have dreamed of and suffered for all these months. Something tells me that you have

descended to my plane. I will not kiss you, Genevra, until you have promised to become my wife."

She had not taken her eyes from his white, intense face during this long summing-up.

"Hollingsworth, I cannot, I will not blame you for thinking ill of me," she said. "Have I fallen in your eyes? I wanted you to be near me. I wanted you to know that when the courts freed me from that man that I would be ready and happy to come to you as *your* wife. I am not in mourning to-day, you see. I knew you were coming. As God is my witness, I have no husband to mourn for. He was nothing to me. I want you for my husband, dearest. It was what I meant when I sent out there for you—that, and nothing else."

THE END